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ESSAYS 
OF 
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THE ESSAYS OF
SAINTE-BEUVE

EDITED, WITH CRITICAL MEMOIR

BY

WILLIAM SHARP

VOL. I.

ON MEN AND WOMEN



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TO

MONSIEUR PAUL BOURGET.

MY DEAR PAUL BOURGET,—I would have you accept the dedication of this little volume as the expression, however inadequate, of the rare debt of pleasure I owe to you as poet, as novelist, and as critic. But over and above this, it seems fitting I should couple the name of the author of the brilliant and suggestive “Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine” and the more recent “Portraits d’Écrivains” with that of the pioneer of modern literary criticism, of criticism as a fine art—that I should associate here your name and that of Sainte-Beuve, that delicate analyst and dainty forager among the cultivated flowers and wildwood blooms of literature—the “naturalist of minds,” as he called himself.

Permit me, then, to inscribe to you this short prefatory essay, where I present, for English readers, as simply and concisely as practicable, the significant facts in the life of the master-critic, and certain dominant traits—physiognomic characteristics, so to say—of his achievement in literature, an achievement at once so great in extent and so complex in its nature. How winsome and graceful, even now, even in translation, are those “Portraits,” with their delicate aroma of rare culture, with their ever-recurrent, vivid, flashing fancies and inspirations.

I can but regret the insufficiency of my acknowledgment; but you have read how it was the wont of the Islanders naively to offer the foreign traffickers from oversea their rude iron in exchange for wrought gold.—Your friend,

WILLIAM SHARP.

LONDON, *Midsummer* 1890.

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CRITICAL MEMOIR.



AMONG the innumerable apt sentences with one of which an essay upon Sainte-Beuve, the sovereign critic, might fittingly be introduced, I doubt if there be any better than this: "I have but one diversion, one pursuit: I analyze, I botanize, I am a naturalist of minds. What I would fain create is Literary Natural History." He was, and is, unquestionably the foremost "naturaliste des esprits:" in literary natural history he is at once the Buffon and Humboldt, the Linnæus and Cuvier, the Darwin even, of scientific criticism. It is conceivable that the future historian of our age will allot to Sainte-Beuve a place higher even than that which he holds by common consent of his cultured countrymen, even than that claimed for him by one or two of our own ablest critics, Matthew Arnold, in particular, and Mr. John Morley. He was not a great inventor, a new creative force, it is true; but he was, so to say, one of the foremost practical engineers in literature, — he altered the course of the alien stream of criticism, compelled its waters to be tributary to the main river, and gave it a new impetus, an irresistible energy, a fresh and vital importance.

I.

During the ten or twelve years in which I have been a systematic reader of Sainte-Beuve, I have often wondered if his literary career would have been a very different one from what we know it, if he had been born ere the parental tides of life were already on the ebb. Students of physiology are

well aware of the fact that children born of parents beyond the prime of life are, in the first degree, inferior in physique to those born, say, to a father of thirty years of age and to a mother five-and-twenty years old; and, in the second degree, that the children of parents married after the prime of life, are, as a rule, less emotional than those born of a union in the more ardent and excitable years of youth. The present writer admits that he is one of the seemingly very few who regard the greatest of literary critics as also a true poet,—not a great, not even an important, but at least a genuine poet, whose radical shortcoming was the tendency to produce beautiful verse rather than poetry, but the best of whose metrical writings may confidently be compared with those of any of the notable contemporary lesser poets of France. And it is because in the “Life, Poems, and Thoughts of Joseph Delorme,” in “Les Consolations,” in the “Pensées d’Août,” I for one find so much which is praiseworthy, which is excellent even, that I have often wondered if, his natal circumstances having been other than they were, the author who has become so celebrated for his inimitable *Causeries du Lundi* might have become famous as a poet. That the keen subjectivity of emotion which is at the base of the poetic nature was his may be inferred from a hundred hints throughout his writings: he was very far from being, what some one has called him, a “mere bloodless critic, serenely impartial because of his imperturbable pulse.” To cite a single example: in one of his “Notes et Remarques,” printed in M. Pierrot’s appendical volume (Tome xvi^{m^e}.) to the collected *Causeries du Lundi*, he says, *à propos* of his novel “Volupté,” “Why do I not write another novel? To write a romance was for me but another, an indirect way of being in love, and to say so.” It was not “a mere bloodless critic” who penned that remark. But, withal, in his poetry, in his essays, in his critiques, in the episodes of his long and intellectually active life, it is obvious to the discerning reader that Sainte-Beuve rarely attained to the white-heat of emotion for any length of time: that a cold wave of serene judg-

ment, of *ennui* often enough, speedily dissipated the intoxication of spiritual ardour. But in those white-heat moments he touches so fine a note, reaches so high a level, that one realizes the poet within him is not buried so deep below his ordinary self as the common judgment would have us believe. Had Mlle. Augustine Coilliot not been past forty when she gave her hand to the cultivated, respected M. de Sainte-Beuve, Commissioner of Taxes at Boulogne-sur-mer, and had he, then in his fifty-second year, been more robust in health (he died a few months after his marriage), their child might have inherited just that impulse of passionate life, to the absence of which perhaps we owe the critic at the expense of the poet. But the century has been rich in poetic literature, while there have been few eminent critics,—till Sainte-Beuve no French critic, great by virtue of the art of criticism alone. It is only since the advent of Sainte-Beuve, indeed, that criticism has come to be accepted as an art, that is in France; for, among us, criticism, as distinct from conventional book-reviewing, can at most be said just to exist.

The Mlle. Augustine Coilliot referred to was the daughter of a Boulogne sailor who had married an Englishwoman, and the writers of biographical articles have been fond of tracing to this Anglo-Saxon strain the great critic's strong predilection for English poetry. It may, however, be doubted if the fact that his grandmother was English had much to do with Sainte-Beuve's love of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Cowper. Earnestness, austerity even, always deeply appealed to him; he loved Pascal and Bossuet better than Villon or the Abbé Galiani; and this love would in any case have led him to the British poets who are pre-eminently the exponents of earnest reflection upon human life. Besides this, Sainte-Beuve the elder was a man of culture, of a serious bias of mind, an admirer of Shakespeare in the original, and probably, therefore, of other English authors; and again, Boulogne, even at the beginning of the century, was much frequented by visitors from the other side of the Channel, and its

schools contained many young Anglo-Saxons sent thither to learn French. Only once, so far as I can recollect, and that incidentally, does he allude to the strain of English blood in him, though with the non-existence of any serviceable index to his voluminous writings it is impossible to make any such assertion with assurance. The absence of allusion would, with so scrupulous a literary analyst as Sainte-Beuve, indicate that he laid no stress whatever upon the circumstance.

Mlle. Coilliot was of an old bourgeois family which, though it held a reputable position in the lower town, was accustomed to straits of poverty. She had not even the smallest dowry to bring to the man who married her, and this was one reason why M. Sainte-Beuve (*de Sainte-Beuve*, he maintained, though his son discarded the aristocratic prefix, partly from a conviction that the family had no right to it, partly from republican scruple) postponed marriage for a goodly space of time after he had won the already middle-aged Augustine's consent to a betrothal. He himself was also a native of Picardy, having been born at Moreuil: a person, indubitably, of exceptional culture, genial, sympathetic, a student, a man of the world. Sainte-Beuve was convinced that he owed his most distinctive traits not to his mother but to his father, though, as a posthumous child, the sole intellectual communion with the latter which he enjoyed was through the discriminative and suggestive annotations which the "Commissioner" was wont to make upon the margins of many of the books in his well-selected library. A few months (not a few weeks, as sometimes affirmed) after his marriage, M. Sainte-Beuve died suddenly; and within three months from that event, that is on December 23rd, 1804, his wife gave birth to a son, who, in remembrance of both his parents, was christened Charles Augustin. In the invaluable autobiographical fragment which was found among his papers on the morrow of his death, Sainte-Beuve states that he was brought up by his widowed mother, who had been left with sadly straitened means yet not in extreme poverty,

and by a sister of his father, who united her slender income to that of Mme. Sainte-Beuve, and so enabled the small family of three to live in comparative comfort. The boy was carefully educated at the lay school of a M. Blériot, and was particularly well grounded in Latin. His intellectual development was rapid. He had scarcely entered upon his teens before he had become a student, and his mother, sympathetic and intelligent if not actively intellectual, gave him every encouragement. It was at this time that he read many of the books which bore his father's marginalia; and no doubt the mere circumstance of annotation impressed him with the importance of the subject-matter. Some ten years or so later he alluded, in one of his poems, to his father and his indirect influence upon him:—

“ Mon père ainsi sentait. Si, né dans sa mort même,
Ma mémoire n'eut pas son image suprême,
Il m'a laissé du moins son âme et son esprit,
Et son goût tout entier à chaque marge écrit.”

What is even more noteworthy is his consciousness of his educational shortcomings when, in his fourteenth year, he realised that he was not likely to learn anything more at M. Blériot's school. “I felt strongly how much I lacked:” and in this persuasion he urged his mother to take, or send, him to Paris. It was not an easy thing for the widow to do, but she managed to send him to the capital (September 1818), and to arrange for his board with a M. Laundry, a man of some note, who had formerly been a professor at the College of Louis-la-Grand, and was a mathematician and philosopher. At the house in the Rue de la Cerisail of this *esprit libre*, this free-thinker, as Sainte-Beuve calls him, the young scholar met several men of high standing in the world of letters, among them certain eminent students of science. He seems to have been noticed by them, though he did not quite relish being treated as a hobbledehoy, “as a big boy, as a little man.” He was an instinctive student: to learn was as natural to him as to play is easy for most boys, and yet he does not seem to have been

devoid of the gaiety and even *abandon* of youth. At the College of Charlemagne, at the end of the first year of his attendance, he took part in the general competition, and succeeded in carrying off the highest prize for history; and in the following year, at the Bourbon College, he gained the prize for Latin verse, and had the further distinction of a Governmental award, in the form of a medal, as a special recognition of his scholarly achievements. One of his school friends, Charles Potier, the son of the eminent actor, and himself afterwards successful on the stage, has put on record his recollection of how he and Sainte-Beuve acted the familiar old parts of the clever and the stupid boy;— how while he dug or hoed the garden-plot which had been allotted to them, the other Charles sat idly by, obliviously engaged in some book or indolently abstracted; and how, in return, he was helped by his friend in the uncongenial task of class-exercises. Sainte-Beuve was free to spend his evenings as he chose, and he voluntarily studied medical science, at first with the full intention of becoming a physician, later with the idea of making the philosophical study of physiology and chemistry his specialities, and, finally, simply for the value of the training and its bearing upon that new science of literature which he was one of the earliest to apprehend as a complex unity. The lectures of Messieurs Magendie, Robiquet, and Blainville, respectively upon physiology, chemistry, and natural history, interested him profoundly. "I went every evening to these lectures at the *Athénée*, off the Palais Royal, from seven to ten o'clock," he says in his autobiographical fragment, "and also to some literary lectures." It was natural that this preoccupation with strictly scientific study should bias his mind to the materialistic school of thought; and one is not surprised to learn, on the authority of D'Haussonville, his biographer, that in his own judgment he had reached his true ground, "*mon fonds véritable*," in the most pronounced eighteenth-century materialism. It is, however, interesting and suggestive to note that even at that time Sainte-Beuve was dominated by his exceptional

mental receptivity ; that he was swayed this way and that by the intellectual duality which has puzzled so many of his readers. Daunou and Lamarck were his prophets ; by them he swore, their words contained the authentic gospel ; but the same week, perhaps, as that in which he proclaimed his enfranchisement from the most abstract Deism, he would announce his conviction that a Supreme Power controlled the tides of life,—as when he wrote to his friend, afterwards the Abbé Barbe, distinctly asserting his recognition of God as “the source of all things.” The mystic in him was always side by side with the physiologist, the unflinching analyst, just as the poet was ever comrade to the critic. It is to this, indeed, that Sainte-Beuve owes his pre-eminence, to this that is to be traced the fundamental secret of his spell.

In later life he was fully conscious of his indebtedness to those early medical and scientific studies ; and many will call to mind his famous defence of the Faculty, in the Senate of the Second Empire, when an attempt was made to limit the medical professors in Governmental institutions in the free expression of their views. The very least he could do, he declared, was to give his testimony in favour of that Faculty to which he owed the philosophical spirit, the love of exactitude and of physiological reality, and “such good method as may have entered into my writings.” As a matter of fact, his early scientific training was of the highest value. It is possible that, with his strong religious bias, if he had been educated at an ecclesiastical seminary he would have become one of the great company led by Pascal and Bossuet, a spiritual comrade of his contemporaries Lamennais and Lacordaire ; that, but for his liaison with radical materialism, the Art, the Science of Criticism, would have remained half-formless and indeterminate, and waited long for its first great master.

His several scientific excursions led to his following the regular course in the study of medicine ; and, with the goal of a medical career in view, he was an assiduous student till 1827, when he was in his twenty-third year. At that date an event occurred which determined his

particular line of energy. But before this he had already begun to write. These tentative efforts, in verse and prose, conventional though they were, encouraged him to believe that he had the literary faculty, though even then his sense of style was so developed that he realized how wide was the gulf between mere facility and a vital dominating impulse. His mother, who had come from Boulogne to watch over her son, saw these literary indications with an annoyance which grew into alarm ; for at that time the literary career was rarely a remunerative one, and, moreover, her heart was set upon her son's success as a physician or collegiate professor of medicine. It was not, as a matter of fact, till his election to the Academy, that she admitted the wisdom of his early decision ; and even then she complained, and not without justice, of the terrible wear and tear of an unceasingly active literary life. Mme. Sainte-Beuve, who lived with her son till her death at the goodly age of eighty-six, seems to have been an intelligent and sympathetic rather than an intellectually clever woman ; and though her always affectionate Charles loved and admired her, it would not appear that he enjoyed with her any rare mental communion.

The youth who at the College of Charlemagne had gained the History prize attracted the particular attention of his professor, M. Dubois. A friendship, as intimate as practicable in the circumstances, ensued ; and when, in 1824, M. Dubois founded the *Globe*, the journal which ere long became so famous and so influential both in politics and literature, he asked Sainte-Beuve to join the staff as an occasional contributor. This was a remarkable compliment, for the young student was quite unknown, and had done nothing to warrant such an honour ; so it is clear that M. Dubois must have had a strong opinion as to the young man's capabilities. Sainte-Beuve was all the more gratified because the staff of writers who had promised their practical support comprised men so famous as Guizot and Victor Cousin, Jouffroy, Ampère, Mérimée, De Broglie, and Villemain. It was not long before the *Globe* became a power in

Paris, and thereafter throughout France and northern Europe: even the great Goethe read it regularly, and alluded to it in terms of cordial praise. It was regarded as the organ of the principal exponents of that earlier Romantic movement which made the latter years of the Restoration so brilliant, and worked like powerful yeast through contemporary thought and literature. Politically, it was the mouthpiece of those who were characterised as *les Doctrinaires*. Naturally the young medical student, who had scarce unsheathed his virginal literary sword, was not among the first contributors. When M. Dubois did entrust to him several short reviews, he did not allow these to appear without, on his own part, scrupulous revision. They did not attract any particular notice: few were curious as to the personality of the critic whose articles appeared above the initials "S.B." But the editor soon discovered that his youngest contributor was quite able to stand alone so far as literary craftsmanship was concerned. One day he delighted the novice by saying to him, "*Now you know how to write; henceforth you can go alone.*" Confidence helped style, and Parisian men of letters read with appreciative interest the new recruit's articles on Thiers' "*Histoire de la Révolution*" and Mignet's "*Tableau*" of the same epoch. He may be said to have definitively gained his place as a recognised literary critic by the time that he had published his able and scholarly review of Alfred de Vigny's "*Cinq Mars*." It was still before he had finally given up a medical career that, by means of a review, he formed a new acquaintanceship which was to prove of great importance to him, and not only as a man of letters. One morning, late in 1826, he chanced to call upon M. Dubois, who was engaged in turning over the pages of two volumes of "*Odes and Ballads*," which he had just received. The editor of the *Globe* asked Sainte-Beuve to review them, having first explained that they were by an acquaintance of his, "*a young barbarian of talent,*" interesting on account of his forceful character and the incidents of his life—Victor Hugo. The volumes were duly

carried off, read, re-read, and reviewed. When the critic took his MS. to his editor he told the latter that this Victor Hugo was not such a barbarian after all, but a man of genius. The review appeared in the issue of the *Globe* for the 2nd of January 1827; and it is interesting to know that among the earliest foreign readers of it was Goethe, who on the 4th expressed to Eckermann his appreciation of Hugo, and his belief that the young poet's fortunes were assured since he had the *Globe* on his side. And of course the author of "Odes et Ballades" was delighted. He called upon M. Dubois, enthusiastically expressed his gratification, maugre the few strictures upon his poetic and metrical extravagances which the article contained, and begged for the address of the writer, which to his surprise he ascertained to be in the same street as that wherein he and his beautiful wife Adèle had their apartments. The latter were at No. 11 Rue Notre Dame des Champs, while Sainte-Beuve and his mother resided in simpler and much smaller rooms on the fourth floor at No. 19. The critic was out when the poet called, but a return visit was speedily made. No doubt Sainte-Beuve was not the man to regret any useful experience, and yet one may question, from knowledge of the man in his later years, if, could he have relived and at the same time refashioned the drift of his life, he would have made that eventful call. From it, indirectly, arose his "one critical crime," that of wilful blindness to shortcomings because of the influence of a personal charm; and to it, also, was due the "romantic" prose and poetry of the morbid and supersensitive Joseph Delorme. Poetically, in a word, he would not have had what he calls somewhere his "liaison avec l'école poétique de Victor Hugo." On the other hand, he owed much to his intimacy with the Hugos and their circle, which at that time comprised Alfred de Vigny, Lamartine, Musset, and other ardent representatives of *Jeune France*. The recollection of his critical reception of Alfred de Musset was always, in late years, one of Sainte-Beuve's thorns in the flesh. But the accusation which has been made, that he was chagrined by the poet's manner to

him when they first met, and that the critic allowed his personal resentment to bias his judgment, is ridiculous. I was surprised to see something to this effect in some recent critical volume. Surely the writer must, for one thing, have forgotten that passage in "Ma Biographie" (*Nouveaux Lundis*, Tome xiii.) where the author expressly recounts the circumstances.*

Sainte-Beuve was impressed by Victor Hugo's genius and captivated by his personal charm; and, at the same time, he was fascinated by Madame Hugo. He became an intimate friend; visited No. 11 whenever he willed; saw the poet at least twice daily; praised, admired, wrote about the beautiful Adèle—and, indeed, became so enthusiastically friendly that the brilliant group which formed *Le Cénacle* (the Guest-Chamber), a club of kindred spirits in the several arts, must have thought that their latest recruit was qualifying to be the prophet of woman's supremacy in all things. As a matter of fact, the Hugo circle was not fettered by severe social conventionalities; yet even the self-confident Victor made objections when he found his numerous friends, from the polished Alfred de Vigny and the sentimental Lamartine to "Musset l'Ennuyé" and the brilliant light-hearted essayist, whom Monselet

* "Quelques biographes veulent bien ajouter que c'est alors que je fus présenté à Alfred de Musset. Cea messieurs n'ont aucune idée des dates. Musset avait alors à peine dix-huit ans. Je le rencontrai un soir chez Hugo, car les familles se connaissaient; mais on ignorait chez Hugo que Musset fit des vers. C'est ce lendemain matin, après cette soirée, que Musset vint frapper à ma porte. Il me dit en entrant: 'vous avez hier récité des vers; eh bien, j'en fais et je viens vous les lire.' Il m'en récita de charmants, un peu dans le goût d'André Chénier. Je m'empressai de faire part à Hugo de cette heureuse recrue poétique. On lui demanda désormais des vers à lui-même, et c'est alors que nous lui vîmes faire ses charmantes pièces de *l'Andalouse* et du *Départ pour la chasse (le Lever)*." After this explicit statement that at the Hugo's no one knew that the youthful Musset wrote verse; that the latter sought out the critic, read him some of his poems, which his courteous auditor found charming; and that Sainte-Beuve made haste to announce to Hugo that a promising poetic recruit had come to the fore;—after this, it is absurd to allude to Sainte-Beuve as prejudiced against Musset from the first on account of pique.

afterwards with so much justice called "the smiling critic" (*le critique souriant*), addressing his wife as Adèle, as freely as they called each other Alfred or Victor or Charles, as frequently as they applied one to the other the term "master." In France every writer is called *cher maître* by some other author. As for Sainte-Beuve, his complaint was so severe that, though he laughed at it afterwards as a flirtation with Romanticism, it might best be called *Adelatsme*. This one-sided passion was no doubt the mainspring of the sufferings, thoughts, and poesies of the melancholy Joseph Delorme, that Gallic counterpart of the much more unendurable Werther. True, something of Sainte-Beuve's deeper melancholy of "seriousness" may have been due to his remote English strain, and his splenetic temperament to the fact that his mother passed several dolorous months between his birth and the death of her husband. It seems strange that so acute a critic of literary physiology should not have seen that his "spleen" was due more to want of outdoor life and to incessant mental preoccupation, and (in the "Joseph Delorme" period) to what I have in persiflage called *Adelatsme*, than to the circumstance of his mother having borne him during months of widowhood, or to that of his grandmother having been an Englishwoman. Although he was never married, Sainte-Beuve was of a susceptible nature. There is absolutely no warrant for the belief that he was so deeply in love with Adèle Hugo that his whole life was affected by the blight of unrequited affection. On the contrary, if he was the *critique souriant* in the world of literature, he was the *critique gai* in the affairs of life.

For a time everything prospered with *Le Cénacle*. Then one member and then another grew lukewarm or directly seceded. Sainte-Beuve slowly diverged from the views he had allowed himself to expound, overborne as he had been by the charm of Victor and the fascination of Madame Hugo. The already famous poet does not seem to have had any particularly high appreciation of his critical friend as a

man of letters ; indeed, Sainte-Beuve was commonly regarded as nothing more than, at most, a conscientious and able critic, with genuine enough but mediocre original powers. In the first flush of intimacy, however, Hugo was as immoderate in his praise of his new acquaintance as was his wont in the matter of superlatives.* But when the "eagle," the "royal meteor," ceased from the making of critical honey, when, in giving a present of a book, he no more inscribed above his signature on the flyleaf such pleasant phrases as, "To the greatest lyrical inventor French poetry has known since Ronsard"—but, instead, uttered such words as "theatricality," "violence," "eccentricity," then there was a cooling of enthusiasm.

But about this time, and indirectly owing to the Hugo connection, two important things happened. A journalistic, a literary career was opened to Sainte-Beuve. He at once availed himself of the chance : so eager was he, indeed, that he left his surgeon's case at St. Louis' Hospital, where he had been a day-pupil, and it is said that he never went back for it. His vocation was in the art of literature, not in the science of medicine. As soon as he realised this, and saw his way to a possibility of living by the pen, he not only busied himself as a journalist, but prepared to undertake an ambitious literary task, a work of real magnitude. Probably if it had not been for Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve's ardent if transient romanticism, the admirable studies on "The French Poetry of the Sixteenth Century" would not have been written—then, at any rate,

* In Mr. Frank T. Marzials' admirable "Life of Victor Hugo" there is the following allusion to Sainte-Beuve : "There is one of [Hugo's] odes, written in December 1827, and inscribed 'To my friend, S.B.,' in which he addresses that young gentleman as an 'eagle,' a 'giant,' a 'star,' and exhorts him to make the acquaintance of lightning, and to roll through the realms of thought like a 'royal meteor' with trailing locks. We, who chiefly know a later Sainte-Beuve, can scarcely recognise him in the character of a [poetic] comet ; and, even then, he himself . . . must sometimes have smiled at these grandiose epithets. Sitting somewhat apart in the shadow, and rhyming a sonnet to a white cap, or an eye of jet—this is how he lives in Alfred de Musset's reminiscences, and I take it the sketch is truer to nature."

and in the form in which we know them. The critic had been impressed by the enthusiasm of Hugo and his circle for the early poets. He read, studied, and came to the conclusion that these were unworthily neglected. He discerned in them, moreover, the poetic ancestors of the enthusiastic members of *Le Cénacle*: both were unconventional, individual, comparatively simple. The series of studies which, as the result, appeared in the *Globe*, delighted the writer's friends and attracted no little share of literary attention; but it was not till the publication of them collectively in book form that Sainte-Beuve's name became widely known as that of a scholarly and above all an independent critic. It was the prevalent literary vogue to decry the pre-classicists, or, at least, to affirm that there was little of abiding worth prior to Molière, Racine, and Corneille. By insight, critical acumen, felicitous quotation, and a light and graceful while incisive style (not, however, characterised by the limpid delicacy and suppleness of his best manner, as in the *Causeries du Lundi*), he won many admirers and did good service to literature, and particularly to literary criticism.

From this time forward Sainte-Beuve's career was a prosperous one, chequered now and again indeed, but in the main happy and marvellously fruitful. For some years he dreamed of poetic fame; gradually he realized that his well-loved "Life, Poetry, and Thoughts of Joseph Delorme," his "Consolations," and his "August Thoughts" would never appeal to a public outside the literary world of Paris, and even there that they were assured of mere respect at most; and finally, he became convinced that it was neither as poet nor as novelist, but as critic, that he was to win the laurels of fame. To the last, however, he had a tender feeling for his poetic performances, and there was no surer way to his good graces than admiration of his poems. The most unsympathetic critic cannot regret Sainte-Beuve's having devoted so much time and so many hopes to those springtide blossoms of a summer that never came. At the least, they helped their author to a wide sympathy, to a

deep insight, to that catholicity of taste which enabled him not only to enjoy for himself, but to interpret for others, the essential merits of a great number of poets,—writers so absolutely distinct as Virgil and Victor Hugo, Villon and William Cowper, Dante and Firdausi, Theocritus and Molière, Ronsard and Racine, and so forth.

When Dr. Véron founded in 1829 the *Revue de Paris*, the predecessor of the more famous *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he made haste to enrol Sainte-Beuve among his contributors. He thought it possible that the poet might make a great name, but he was quite convinced that the critic would become a prince of his tribe. The result of his trust was more than satisfactory. Although Sainte-Beuve was only five or six and twenty when he wrote his articles on Boileau, Racine, La Fontaine, Rousseau, André Chenier, and others, how admirable they are, and how well worth perusal even at the present date. In style, it is true, they are graceful and scholarly rather than winsome with individual charm, for the latter does not become a characteristic of his work till he has reached the noon of his maturity; but, even with this qualification, they are unquestionably delightful reading.

In the summer of 1830 Sainte-Beuve was in Normandy, at Honfleur, on a visit to his friend Ulric Guttinguer, when the July Revolution overthrew many institutions besides that of the old monarchy. With the advent of Louis Philippe arose schism among the brilliant staff of the *Globe*. Some maintained that the hour had come in which to cry "Halt" to further innovations; one or two wavered and talked of compromise; the more strenuous affirmed that there was as pressing need of progress as ever. Among the progressists was Sainte-Beuve, who had hurried back to Paris. The *Globe* became the organ of the Saint-Simonians; and though Sainte-Beuve never identified himself with the school of Saint-Simon, he fought valiantly as a free-lance by the side of its exponents. But, before this change in the destiny of the paper (for, after the split, it abruptly lost its place in the van of Parisian journals, and

was sold at a loss to a sanguine experimentalist, who in turn speedily disposed of it to the Saint-Simonians), a tragi-comedy, in which Sainte-Beuve and his former good friend M. Dubois were the chief actors, occurred. The clash of opinions at the editorial office begat heated discussions, reproaches, taunts even. Dubois reminded Sainte-Beuve, in not very complimentary terms, of how he had given him a lift into the literary world: the critic made a scathing reply. The blood of all the Dubois boiled in the veins of the worthy editor, and he challenged Sainte-Beuve to mortal combat. So high did feeling run that the matter was really a serious one; though we may hesitate to accept the great critic's after-statement, that he went to the duel with the full intention of killing his adversary. It was the Joseph Delorme lying latent in Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve who made this affirmation. The preliminaries of the duel were arranged with all circumspection; both antagonists made their wills and felt alternately heroic and despondent; and at last the hour came. It was a chill and wretched morning, for the rain came down in a steady pour. What was the astonishment of M. Dubois and the seconds of both principals to see Sainte-Beuve take up his position with his pistol in his right hand and his unfolded umbrella upheld by his left. To the remonstrances of the seconds, he protested that he was willing to be shot, if need be—but to be drenched, no! (*Je veux bien être tué; mais mouillé, non.*) Four shots were exchanged, and editor and critic remained unhurt. Neither their ill-success nor the rain damped their bloodthirstiness, however, and if it had not been for the firm remonstrances of the seconds, who declared that the demands of honour had been amply satisfied, one or other of the combatants would have suffered for his folly. Happily, this was Sainte-Beuve's sole martial experience. As one of his detractors long afterwards maliciously remarked, thenceforth he confined himself to stabbing with the pen, and to destroying literary reputations by a *causerie*.

Sainte-Beuve's renewed connection with the *Globe* was not

of long duration, however. He had no interest but one of curiosity in the doctrines of the St. Simonians: neither more nor less than he, pre-eminently the hedonist of modern literature, felt in those of the enthusiasts who were bent upon reconciling democratic and radical politics with the most conservative Roman Catholicism. Although he knew and admired Lacordaire, Lamennais, and Montalembert, he refused to co-operate with them in the writing of articles for their journalistic organ, *L'Avenir*. These eminent men were not alone in their inability to understand Sainte-Beuve's mental temperament. They thought that because he seemed profoundly interested he was therefore a disciple. But the foremost critic of the day was a man of a passionate intellectual curiosity: his sovereign need was for new mental intellectual impressions. It was his insatiable curiosity into all manifestations of mental activity, as much as his exceptional receptivity, elasticity of sympathy, searching insight, and extraordinary synthetic faculty, that enabled him to become the master-critic. His catholicity of taste was his strength as, with others, it is often a source of weakness. It was not through inability to find anchorage in the sea of truth that his was a restless barque, with sails trimmed for seafaring again as soon as a haven was entered: it was because he was a literary viking, consumed with a passion for mental voyaging and remote explorations—because he loved the deep sea, and found that even the profoundest inlets, the grandest bays, were too shallow for him to rest content therein.

"No one," he says, "ever went through more mental vicissitudes than I have done. I began my intellectual life as an uncompromising adherent of the most advanced form of eighteenth-century thought, as exemplified by Tracy, Daunou, Lamarck, and the physiologists: *là est mon fonds véritable*. Then I passed through the psychological and doctrinaire school as represented by my confrères on the *Globe*, but without giving it my unqualified adhesion. For a time thereafter I had my liaison with the school of Victor Hugo, and seemed to lose myself in poetical romanticism. Later, I fared by the margins of St. Simonism, and, soon thereafter, liberal-Catholicism as represented by Lamennais and his group. In 1837, when residing at Lausanne, I

gilded past Calvinism and Methodism . . . but in all these wanderings I never (save for a moment in the Hugo period, and when under the influence of a charm) forfeited my will or my judgment, never pawned my belief. On the other hand, I understood so well both the world of books and that of men that I gave dubious encouragement to those ardent spirits who wished to convert me to their convictions, and indeed claimed me as one of themselves. But it was all curiosity on my part, a desire to see everything, to examine closely, to analyse, along with the keen pleasure I felt in discovering the relative truth of each new idea and each system, which allured me to my long series of experiments, to me nothing else than a prolonged course of moral physiology."

The short space at my command prevents my enlarging upon the hint conveyed in the last phrase, except to say that it is directly indicative to Sainte-Beuve's fundamental critical principle. To him criticism was literary physiology. With him a series of critiques meant a series of studies of—(1) a writer as one of a group, as the product of the shaping spirit of the time; (2) a writer as an individual, with all his inherited and acquired idiosyncrasies; (3) a writer as seen in his writings, viewed in the light of all ascertainable *personalia*; (4) the writings themselves, intrinsically and comparatively estimated. But, primarily, his essays were as much studies of character, of moral physiology, as of literary values.

After his withdrawal from the too sectarian *Globe*, Sainte-Beuve joined the staff of the *National*. With the ultra-Republican principles of that paper he had but a lukewarm sympathy, but his friend Armand Carrel, the editor, assured him that nothing would be expected from him save purely literary contributions. For about three years (1831-4) he remained on the staff of the *National*, and it was in the last year of the connection that he published his one novel, "Volupté." The book had a gratifying reception so far as wide notice was concerned; but it was generally adjudged to be unwholesome in tone and somewhat too self-conscious in style—though so beautiful a nature and so refined a critic as Eugénie de Guérin affirmed it to be a notable and even a noble book. That the prejudice against the author on account of it must have been strong is

evident from the fact that when it was suggested to Guizot, then Minister of Public Instruction, that he should confer upon Sainte-Beuve a professional post at the Normal School, just vacant through the resignation of Ampère, he refused to appoint a man, howsoever brilliantly qualified, who had written such books as "Joseph Delorme" and "Volupté." Guizot was conscientiously scrupulous in this matter; and to show that he bore no personal ill-feeling, he appointed Sainte-Beuve to the secretaryship of an historical Commission, a post which the equally conscientious critic resigned in less than a year, on the ground that it was becoming or had become a mere sinecure. Another instance of his conscientiousness is his having declined, about the same date, the Cross of the Legion of Honour—a distinction he would have been proud to accept had he felt assured that it was offered in recognition of his literary merits, but upon which he looked suspiciously because it came when the Ministry of M. Molé and M. Salvandy, both personal friends of his, was in power. Three years after the publication of his novel, he issued the last of his purely imaginative productions, the "Pensées d'Août." In the same year (1837) he went to Switzerland, and having been invited by the Academy of Lausanne to deliver a course of lectures, he settled for a time in the pleasant Swiss town. There he delivered in all eighty-one lectures, the foundation of his famous and voluminous work on Port Royal (the story of the religious movement in the seventeenth century known as Jansenism), which occupied him intermittently for twenty years, is a monument of labour, research, and scrupulous historic fairness, and, though the least read, is one of his greatest achievements.

Both before and during his Swiss sojourn, and for about ten years thereafter, Sainte-Beuve was a regular contributor to the most famous magazine in Europe, the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which had been founded in 1831, heir to the defunct *Revue de Paris*. The first number contains an article by him upon his friend George Farcy, a victim of the July Revolution; and thereafter appeared that long

and delightful series of "Portraits Littéraires," studies of contemporary as well as of deceased writers, which not only gave him a European reputation as a leading critic, but ultimately won him his election to the French Academy. This signal good-fortune happened in 1845, on the occasion of the death of Casimir Delavigne; and the irony of circumstances was obvious to many in the fact that the eulogium on the new "immortal" had to be pronounced by the reluctant Victor Hugo, his immediate predecessor. It was a memorable date, that 17th of February; and if among the many "immortals" who have been raised to glory by the Academy there are relatively few whose fame will be imperishable, there are not many with juster claims to remembrance, though in widely different degrees, than the two authors who were then elected to the coveted honour, Prosper Mérimée and Sainte-Beuve.

His periodical articles and his books (including five volumes of essays which he had contributed to the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*) brought him in a very moderate income; and it was not till 1840 that his means were materially improved. In that year he was appointed one of the keepers of the Mazarin Library. The appointment meant not only an increase of income, but a change of residence, for it comprised a suite of residential apartments at the Institute. Up to this time Sainte-Beuve had been living in two small rooms on the fourth floor of a house in a remote street—living extremely moderately, and in a seclusion almost monastic; indeed, he had even adopted the ruse of calling himself Joseph Delorme. In his new abode he was happy as well as comfortable, and thankfully embraced the opportunity of study and leisurely composition which his post afforded him. This pleasant state of affairs came to an end after the Revolution in 1848. A ridiculous charge of corruption was brought up against him by envious and inimical journalists and political adversaries; the ultra-Republicans accused him of having accepted bribes, hush-money, from the late Government. In vain Sainte-Beuve protested, and vainly he demanded a searching

inquiry. The hint was taken up: everywhere he was abused, condemned, scathingly ridiculed. Even when, at last, the truth was revealed, and the greedy public learned that the amount of Sainte-Beuve's indebtedness was £4, and that that sum had been expended upon the alteration of a smoking chimney in his department of the Library, and the charge inadvertently entered in the official books simply under the heading "Ste. Beuve,"—even then there were many ungenerous souls who kept up the parrot cry of contumely. It somewhat unfortunately happened that about this time Sainte-Beuve left Paris, and of course there was at once a shout of triumph from his enemies. The real reasons for his departure were primarily financial, though no doubt he was not at all sorry to leave a city which had for the time being become so disagreeable to him—moreover, his distaste for the political issues then in full development was very strong. But after his resignation of his post at the Mazarin Library, which he had given in the heat of his indignation during the bribery controversy, he found that he would have to do something at once for a living. The political turmoil of 1848 was unfavourable for the pursuit of pure literature; and despite his high reputation, the editors whom he knew could not promise him a sufficiency of remunerative work until the times changed for the better. Accordingly, he very willingly accepted the Professorship of French Literature at the University of Liège, offered to him by M. Rogier, the Belgian Minister of the Interior. Liège he found monotonous and provincial, but he stayed there for some time, and attracted more than local, more even than national attention by his preliminary course of lectures on the chronological history of French literature. There, also, he delivered the famous series on Chateaubriand and his Contemporaries, which amply demonstrated his independence as a critic, though many of his judgments and reservations brought a veritable storm of reproaches and angry recriminations about his ears. For a long time he was called an ingrate, a hypocrite, a resentful critic inspired

by pique; but ultimately it was acknowledged that he had written the ablest and justest critique of the celebrated egotist and *poseur*. The fundamental reason of the attacks upon Sainte-Beuve was on account of his so-called inconsistency. True, among his early "Literary Portraits" was a flattering essay on Chateaubriand, but he was then under the magic charm of Madame Recamier, at whose house, Abbaye-aux-Bois, he heard read aloud in solemn state numerous extracts from the famous writer's unpublished "Memoirs." Moreover, Chateaubriand had inspired him with a temporary enthusiasm. When, with fuller knowledge of the man and his writings and with the "Correspondence" to boot, he found that he had been mistaken, he said so. The commonplace mind detests inconsistency with an almost rancorous hatred, oblivious of the fact that, as Emerson has said, only fools never change their views.

"Chateaubriand and his Literary Group under the Empire" is the work which marks the turning-point in Sainte-Beuve's genius. Thenceforth he was, in truth, the foremost critic of his time. In style as well as in matter, his productions from this time are masterpieces; and though there are some essays which could now be dispensed with, either because of the fuller light cast upon their subjects by later students, or on account of certain shortcomings in the matter of prejudiced judgment, seven-tenths of them may be read to-day with much the same pleasure as they were perused two, three, or four decades ago.

Late in 1849 Sainte-Beuve, much to the chagrin of his Belgian friends and admirers, left Liège and returned to Paris. He was still hesitating how best to employ his pen, when he received a flattering but to him somewhat startling offer from his friend, Dr. de Véron, editor of *Le Constitutionnel*. This was to the effect that he should write a literary article for that paper every week. The reason of his perturbation was that hitherto he had always composed in leisurely fashion, and for papers or magazines whose readers were cultivated people, much more interested in

literature than in politics and local news. Fortunately, M. de Véron overruled his scruples, and so there began that delightful and now famous series of literary critiques which the writer himself entitled *Causeries du Lundi*. He called them "Monday Chats," because each appeared on a Monday. For five days every week he "sporting his oak," and occupied himself for twelve hours daily with the study of his subject and the writing of his article; on the sixth he finally revised it; Sunday was his sole holiday from his task. By next morning he was deep in the subject of the *Causerie* for the following week. It was the need to be concise and simple that did so much good to Sainte-Beuve's style. The charm of these *Causeries* can be appreciated alike by the most cultivated and the most casual reader. As two of his most eminent friends said of them, they were all the better inasmuch as he had not had time to spoil them. From the end of 1849 to almost exactly twenty years later he wrote weekly, in the *Constitutionnel* or the *Moniteur*, with a single considerable interval, one of those brilliant, scholarly, fascinating articles,—collectively, a mass of extraordinarily varied work now embodied in fifteen goodly volumes.

When the *coup d'état* occurred, Sainte-Beuve gave his approval to the Empire. Thereby he won for himself no little unpopularity. His first materially disagreeable experience of this was when he proceeded to lecture at the Collège de France, to the Professorship of Latin Poetry at which he had been appointed. The students would have none of him. He was an Imperialist, a Government payee, he wrote in the official organ, *Le Moniteur*. He was literally hissed from the lecture-room, whence he retired in high dudgeon. Ultimately the lecture he had tried to deliver, and those which were to have followed, were published in a volume entitled "A Study on Virgil." The single intermission to his regular literary work, already alluded to, was during the four years when he held the post of Maître des Conférences at the Ecole Normale, at a salary of about £240. When he again took up literary

journalism, after his resignation of his professional post, it was once more as a contributor to the *Constitutionnel*. He now made a fair income, for his weekly contributions to that journal brought him in, by special arrangement, an annual salary of £624. The *Causeries* were now called *Nouveaux Lundis*, "New Monday-Chats." In the main this series (begun in 1861) is equal to the *Causeries du Lundi*, though there are signs ever and again of lassitude. This might well be. The work was a steady and serious strain, and the great critic's health gradually became undermined. In 1865, when he was in his sixty-first year, he wrote: "I am of the age at which died Horace, Montaigne, and Bayle, my masters: so I am content to die." It was in this very year that good fortune came to him, and greatly relieved the mental strain under which his strength was waning. He was appointed to a Senatorship of the Second Empire, a position which secured him an annual income of £1200. His senatorial career was a dignified though not a brilliant one. He was ever on the side of true freedom, and was so independent in his attitude that he gave offence to those of his fellow-senators who were Imperialists and resented his championship of religious liberty. This muzzled wrath broke into clamorous fury at an incident concerning which an absurd fuss has been made. Sainte-Beuve had arranged to give a dinner to some of his friends, on the occasion of Prince Napoleon's departure from Paris, and, to suit that gentleman, had appointed Friday (which chanced to be Good Friday) as the night. The Prince, Edmond About, Gustave Flaubert, Rénan, Robin, and Taine duly joined their host and spent a pleasant evening. But the jackals were on the trail. A howl arose about a conspiracy to undermine the religious welfare of the nation; the diners were arraigned as impious debauchees; and Sainte-Beuve in particular was upbraided for his "scandalous orgy."

One other and much more serious annoyance troubled the latter years of Sainte-Beuve. This arose from his writing for *Le Temps* (whither he had transferred his

Causeries, on account of a servile attempt to muzzle him on the part of the temeritous directorate of the *Moniteur*); and as *Le Temps* was hostile to the Government, M. Rouher and his confrères in the Ministry, as well as the whole Senate, thought it shameful that the critic should write for that journal, and did all in their power to force him into conformity with their views. But Sainte-Beuve was firmly independent, and emerged triumphantly from the ordeal.

For some years Sainte-Beuve had been in indifferent health. At last he became ill indeed, and his malady (the stone) caused him such extreme pain that he could only stand or lie when he had writing to do, as to sit was impossible. By the late summer of 1869 his case was desperate. Ultimately a perilous operation was made, but the patient sank under its effects. He died in his house in the Rue Mont Parnasse, on the 13th of October, at the age of sixty-four. Along with the biographical fragment found on his desk on the morrow of his death, which concluded with the celebrated words, "Voué et adonné à mon métier de critique, j'ai tâché d'être de plus en plus un bon et, s'il se peut, habile ouvrier"—"Devoted with all my heart to my profession as critic, I have done my utmost to be more and more a good and, if possible, an able workman;"—along with "Ma Biographie" were found written instructions as to his funeral. He directed that he should be buried in the Cemetery of Mont Parnasse beside his mother; that the ceremony should be as simple as practicable, and without religious rites or even a friendly oration. All due respect was paid to his wishes, and yet seldom has a funeral been attended with greater honour. It was not the Senator of the Second Empire who was carried to the grave, but the greatest of French critics, a writer of European renown. In the immense crowd which formed the voluntary procession—estimated at ten thousand—all political differences were forgotten: uncompromising Imperialists and equally uncompromising Republicans walked in union for once, in company with nearly

all who were distinguished in letters, science, or art. The only words uttered above his grave were more eloquent in their poignant simplicity than the most glowing exordium : "Farewell, Sainte-Beuve ; farewell, our friend."

II.

Sainte-Beuve's literary career may be studied in three main phases. The novelist least claims our attention ; the poet demands it ; while as a critic he appears as of supreme importance.

"Volupté," so far, but, to a much greater extent, the "Vie, Poésies, et Pensées de Joseph Delorme," may be taken as embodying some of the positive and many of the spiritual experiences of Sainte-Beuve's life. We have his own testimony to the fact that "Joseph Delorme" was "a pretty faithful representation of himself morally, but not in the biographical details." This alone would give a permanent interest to the book, as it is admittedly in some degree the autopsychical record of the most complex, brilliant, protean spirit of our time. No one indeed has yet limned Sainte-Beuve for us as he, for instance, has revealed the heart, mind, and soul of Pascal. Neither D'Haussonville, his biographer, nor any of his critics, French and English, has done more than introduce us to the author of so many inimitable *Causeries* ; none of them has made us intimate with Sainte-Beuve himself, notwithstanding the array of authentic facts and suggestive hints which can now be marshalled. He is easiest to be discerned in his writings : not in this essay nor in that series of essays, not in the grave pages of "Port Royal" nor in the alluring byways of the "Lundis," neither in the sensitive poet of "The Consolations" nor in the austere pages of "Pensées d'Août," not in that Gallic Werther, Amaury, the hero of "Volupté," not even in Joseph Delorme, but in all collectively. One is always being surprised in him. There is one man in Amaury, another

in Joseph Delorme, a very different one in "Pensées d'Août," a still more distinct one in the "Nouveaux Lundis," and in his single short tale, the charming "Christel," there are hints of a personality whose shadowy features rarely, if ever, haunt the corridors of the "Causeries." As a matter of fact, Sainte-Beuve became more and more reserved as he found himself deceived by the glowing perspectives of youth. Often he was consumed with a nostalgia for a country whence he was half-voluntarily, half-perforce an exile, the country of the Poetic Land where once he spent "six fleeting celestial months,"* as a native of which he would fain be regarded even in the remote days when he found himself an alien among those whom he yearned to claim as brothers. Thenceforth the man shrank more and more behind the writer. The real Sainte-Beuve was no doubt less recluse in the days when he was a member of *Le Cénacle*, when he was one of the sprightliest in the Hugo circle, and laughed with de Vigny and sighed with Lamartine, debated with Hugo, and flirted with Adèle. But even then his nature could not have been transparent to all, otherwise Alfred de Musset would not have drawn his picture of him as sitting somewhat apart in the shadow, rhyming a sonnet to a demoiselle's cap, or a lyric to his mistress's eyebrow. Truly, as he himself says, in the preface to his "Poésies Complètes," almost all of us have within ourselves a second self ("nous avons presque tous en nous un homme double").

The "Vie, Poésies, et Pensées de Joseph Delorme" has been put forward as an effort on the part of Sainte-Beuve to introduce into France a poetic literature as simple, fresh, and spontaneous as that of the naturalistic poets of England, and of Cowper and Wordsworth in particular. Readers of that notable book will find it difficult to perceive any direct Wordsworthian influence, though the author makes clear his great admiration for the English poet and his school. Joseph Delorme, in fact, is a cousin-

* *Causeries du Lundi*, Tome xvi.

german to Don Juan, closely akin to Chateaubriand's René, the French half-brother to Goethe's Werther. He is the most literary of the family, but while he is as sentimental as René, and as melancholy as Werther, he has not the frank debonnaire licentiousness of Don Juan. He is morbid in his thoughts and in his desires. The fellowship of a Tom Jones would have done him good, the laughing Juan, even, would have acted as a tonic. "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," says Blake; but the poet-visionary did not mean the kind of excess in which the too introspective Joseph indulged. He said one good thing, however, for which he will be remembered—when he spoke of his dread of marriage because of its restrictions upon his "rather rude philanthropy" (a euphemism for "free morals"), and defined it as *une egoïsme à deux personnes*.

Rousseau and Goethe were the literary godfathers of Joseph Delorme, who was born when the author of his being was only five-and-twenty. The nature of the book is indicated by a passage from Senancour's "Obermann," which exactly strikes the key-note: "I have seen him, I have pitied him; I respected him; he was unhappy and virtuous. He had no transcendent misfortunes; but, on entering life, he found himself in a mesh of distastes and satieties ('il s'est trouvé sur une longue trace de dégoûts et d'ennuis'): there he is still, there he has dwelt, there he has grown old ere age has come upon him, there he has literally buried himself." The Adolphe of "Obermann," indeed, is but a more melancholy and a more austere "double" of Joseph.

The following lines are fairly representative of the dominant sentiment of the book.

VŒU.

" Tout le jour du loisir; rêver avec des larmes;
 Vers midi, me coucher à l'ombre des grands chênes;
 Voir la vigne courir sur mon toit ardoisé,
 Et mon vallon riant sous le coteau boisé;

*Chaque soir m'endormir en ma douce folie,
Comme l'heureux ruisseau qui dans mon pré s'oublie;
Ne rien vouloir de plus, ne pas me souvenir,
Vivre à me sentir vivre ! . . . Et la mort peut venir." **

But a healthier note is often struck, as in the blithe strain wedded to a pathetic thought, "Ce ciel restera bleu Quand nous ne serons plus;" often, too, one fresh and haunting, as in

"Et dans ses blonds cheveux, ses blanches mains errantes—
Tels deux cygnes nageant dans les eaux transparentes." . . . †

The "Life, Poetry, and Thoughts" are worth reading; the book contains much that is interesting, no little that is suggestive, not infrequently thoughts, lines, and passages of genuine beauty. But it can enthral only those who are enjoying the exquisite sentimentalism of adolescence; ere long it will interest only the student of a certain literary epoch, the epoch begun by Rousseau, that finds its acme in Byron, which knows its autumn in Werther, that has its grave in the René of Chateaubriand, its brief phantasmal second life in Joseph Delorme. The poetry in it is often sterile, and is frequently forced, self-conscious, obtrusively sedate in imagery, occasionally even is markedly derivative. We find Sainte-Beuve the poet much better worth listening to in "Les Consolations." In point of style there is not very much difference, though a greater dexterity is manifest, a more delicate metrical tact, perhaps also a more unmistakably natural note. But there is no more kinship between the author of "Les Consolations" and

* Δ WISH.

Leisure all the livelong day; to dream, with tears; towards noon, to rest in the shade of great elms; to see the vine-branches trail over my slated roof, and my own little valley smiling under its wooded slope: to fall asleep each evening rapt in my sweet folly, as the happy brook which loses itself in my meadow: to wish for nothing more, to remember nought, in a word, to live as I would fain live! . . . Then death may come!"

† "Through her fair hair her white hands wandering,
Like two swans swimming in transparent waters." . . .

Joseph Delorme than between Don Juan and Manfred. The volume was the product of the religious mysticism which underlay Sainte-Beuve's mental robustness—a trait which allured him often by dangerous pitfalls, but also enabled him to understand so well the great religious writers of whom he still remains the most sympathetic as well as the most brilliant exponent. It seemed ultra-saintly to some of those who read it on its appearance. Béranger annoyed the author by some sly disparagement; Prosper Mérimée cynically smiled at what he took to be a literary ruse; Gustave Planche and others gleefully whetted their vivisectionary knives. On the other hand, it was for the most part well received by the critics, and no cruel witticism like that of Guizot on its predecessor (that Joseph Delorme was “a Werther turned Jacobin and sawbones”) went echoing through Paris. The public remained indifferent, but the poet was gratified when Chateaubriand wrote him a letter of praise, with a characteristic “Écoutez votre génie, Monsieur;” when Hugo and Alfred de Vigny waxed enthusiastic; when Béranger sent an epistle of kindly criticism; and when Lamartine unbosomed himself as follows:—“Yesterday I re-read the ‘Consolations’ . . . they are ravishing. I say it and I repeat it: it is this that I care for in French poetry of this order. What truth, what soul, what grace and poetry! I have wept, I who never weep.” (This must have amused Sainte-Beuve, if not then, later. The sentimental Lamartine was always weeping over one thing or another, and the “J'en ai pleuré, moi qui oncques ne pleure,” is as little apt as though Mr. Pickwick were to say “I have smiled, who never smile.”) . . . It was at this time, the period wherein “The Consolations” were produced, that Sainte-Beuve dreamed upon Latmos and believed that the goddess whom he loved was going to reward his passion. The “celestial months” passed, but they were ever an oasis to which he delighted to return in memory. He even wished, in later years, that those who desired to know him should seek and find him, a happy Dryad flitting through

the shadowy vales and sunlit glades of the woodlands of song. No doubt the real Sainte-Beuve is as much in this book of verse as in any other of his library of volumes, but it is the Sainte-Beuve of a certain period, and even then only one of two selves. "The Consolations" always remained his favourite volume. It contains a great deal of gracious and even beautiful verse, in style often clear as a trout-stream, fresh and fragrant as a May-meadow, though even here, as certainly with his other "poésies," one is inclined to say of him, in the words of his own Joseph Delorme, that he had not sufficiently "the ingenuousness of deep faith, the instinctive and spontaneous cry of passionate emotion." Some of the "Consolations" are extremely Wordsworthian—how closely, indeed, he could enter into the spirit of the great English poet is evident in the following free translation of that most lovely sonnet beginning, "It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free":—

*"C'est un beau soir, un soir paisible et solennel ;
A la fin du saint jour, la Nature en prière
Se tait, comme Marie à genoux sur la pierre,
Qui tremblante et muette écoutait Gabriel :*

*La mer dort ; le soleil descend en paix du ciel ;
Mais dans ce grand silence, au-dessus et derrière,
On entend l'hymne heureux du triple sanctuaire,
Et l'orgue immense où gronde un tonnerre éternel.*

*O blonde jeune fille, à ta tête baissée,
Qui marches près de moi, si ta sainte pensée,
Semble moins qu'à la mienne adorer ce moment,
C'est qu'au sein d'Abraham vivant toute l'année,
Ton ame est de prière, à chaque heure, baignée ;
C'est que ton cœur recite un divin serment."*

This, of course, is but indifferent verse after the superb original, but it shows both how Sainte-Beuve was inspired by Wordsworth, and how ably he too could write, albeit as a translator, in simple and unaffected strains. Although the second, third, and fourth lines bear no resemblance to

"The holy time is quite as a Nun
Breathless with adoration,"

and the rest of the version is only in a lesser degree unliteral, it must be borne in mind that the full beauty of the original is untranslatable, and that the French poet strove to convey to the French reader the same impression as an English reader would gain from the English sonnet. However, the importance of this and other experiments is not to be overlooked. Many of the younger poets owe much, directly or indirectly, to the lesson taught by Sainte-Beuve in what a hostile critic has called his "Anglo-French metrical essays."

Yet, while it is true that the man is perhaps to be seen most clearly in his poetry,—“it is in following the poet that we find the man,” as M. Anatole France says,—even here he is an evasive, an uncertain personality. The strange mixture of a sensuousness that is at times almost sensual, a mysticism which would suit a religious enthusiast, a clarity of thought and an exquisite sense of the beauty of precision and artistic form, a frequent remoteness of shaping emotion, coupled with keen perception of the sovereign value of that resistless formative power which makes the creatures of the imagination more real than the actual beings about us,*—all this, along with his complex style, which now is simple, now is heated with fires unlit of the sun, and again is involved, obscure almost, wrought to an excessive finish, *tourmenté*, makes Sainte-Beuve the poet a profoundly puzzling as well as interesting study. In his last volume of verse, particularly, he is, as one of his critics has said, “*tourmenté à l’excès, souvent d’une étrangeté qui déconcerte.*” But it is quite wrong to assert, as has been affirmed more than once, that Sainte-Beuve’s poetic melancholy, the undertone of each of his three books, is assumed. One writer in *Le Temps* (or *Le Figaro*) recently found a proof of this literary insincerity in some remarks made by the critic in his old age, remarks treating lightly his former mysticism, with an avowal that “his odours of the sacristy

* In his own words he sought to arrive “at that particularity and at that precision which causes the creations of our mind to become altogether ours and to be recognised as ours.”

were really meant for the ladies." "I have been guilty of a little Christian mythology in my time," he admitted, "but it all evaporated long ago. It was for me, as the swan to Leda's wooer, merely a means to reach fair readers and to win their tender regard." But this, quite obviously, is mere badinage. If there be any truth in it at all, it is one of those remote filaments of fact which go to the weaving of the web of truth; nothing more. His melancholy was a genuine sentiment, which found expression differently at divers times. Even in his latest essays, when his natural geniality is allowed free play, it is traceable in those occasional bitternesses and abrupt dislikes, those half-weary and yet mordant "asides," which show that the man was by no means wholly absorbed in the critic. He himself, as we have seen, attributed this fundamental strain of sadness in his nature to his mother's early widowhood. "My mother bore me in mourning and grief," he says; "I have been as it were soaked in sorrow and bathed in tears—and, well, I have often attributed to this maternal grief the melancholy of my young years, and my disposition to weariness of mind and spirit."*

* *Vide* "Correspondance de Sainte-Beuve:" Lettre à M. de Frabière, 25th June 1862.

The "melancholy of my young years" must not be taken too literally. Sainte-Beuve's boyhood seems to have been a happy one. He had love affairs when he was a small child, moreover, if we may take his own word for it. In one of his poems he has the following Boulogne reminiscences:—

" N'eus-je pas ma Camille,
Douce blonde au front pur, paisible jeune fille,
Qu'au jardin je suivais, la dévorant des yeux?
N'ena-je pas Mathilde, au parler sérieux,
Qui remplaça Camille, et plus d'une autre encore?"

"Had I not my Camille, sweet white-browed fair maid, calm damsel, whom I followed to the garden, devouring her with my eyes? Had I not Mathilde, who replaced Camille, and many others beside?" "Oh, these nursemaids, these nursemaids!" the precocious young *roué* may have thought, shaking his curly head, ere he went to play on the sands or upon the old ramparts.

But, as M. France has well said, it was another mother, the Revolution, who inoculated him with the malady of the age — that malady of which M. Taine, the most brilliant of the disciples of Sainte-Beuve, has alluded to so eloquently: “It was then that the malady of the age appeared, the spiritual inquietude typified by Werther and Faust, almost identical with that which, in a somewhat similar time, agitated men at the beginning of the century. I would call it the discontent with present horizons, the vague desire after a higher beauty and an ideal happiness, a pathetically sad aspiration towards the infinite. Man suffers in doubting and yet he doubts: he tries to recapture his lost beliefs, they are really in his hand.” (*Hist. de la Lit. Anglaise*, Tome iii.) This melancholy nature, induced by the spirit of the age, derived now from this source and now from that, and occasionally insincere, is most marked in its least genuine aspects in the “*Pensées d’Août*.” There is nothing in it so fine, in the poetry of melancholy, as the “*Lines*” in the “*Consolations*” (inscribed to Mme. V. H.; no other, of course, than the immaculate Adèle Hugo) beginning

“Plus fraîche que la vigne au bord d’un antre frais.”

The chief poem in the collection, entitled “*Monsieur Jean*,” is an ill-considered attempt at a didactic novelette in verse. The author did not so regard it: he believed that he had wooed and won *Musa Pedestris*, and had given his poetry the tone of serene wisdom. Jean is a natural son of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and is a simple, gentle creature, eager to expiate in his remote village, by piety and endless good deeds, what he cannot but regard as the disastrous glory of his father. But the poet’s failure is a signal instance of the folly of metrical didactics. “*Jean*” bored the reading public, who combined in awarding the “*Pensées d’Août*” what its author called a really savage reception. In this book, more than anywhere else in his poetical writings, is true what Matthew Arnold said of him, that he lacked something of flame, of breath, of pinion: here, more than elsewhere, his poems *côtoient la prose*—coasted peril-

ously near the land of prose. As a matter of fact, the book was a complete failure: it caused the pendulum of his poetic repute to swing back, and to be caught up and never let go again. Moreover, its reception stifled the poet in Sainte-Beuve. It is a poignant personal note that underlies his famous remark, "Every one contains a dead poet in his soul."

But, after all, even the most reluctant reader of Sainte-Beuve as a poet cannot, if he be minded to criticism, afford to overlook this important section of the life-work of the great critic. It is necessary, indeed, not only to an understanding of the man but of the writer. For in these *Poésies Complètes*, to quote the words of a sympathetic critic, "Se peint l'âme la plus curieux, la plus sagace, et la plus compliquée qu'une vieille civilisation ait jamais produite"—"is revealed the most inquiring, the most sagacious, the most complex spirit" to whom the age has given birth.

It is not feasible here, in the limited space at my command, to attempt any analysis of "Volupté," Sainte-Beuve's sole effort in fiction save the short tale "Christel." Some day when a critical historian, curious as to the mainsprings of, let us hope, the long since cured *maladie du siècle*, will occupy himself with the fortunes of Werther and René, Adolphe and Amiel, he will not omit to include in that strange company the amorously sentimental and sentimentally melancholic Amaury. For myself I admit I find that youth quite as entertaining as either of the more famous offspring of Goethe or Chateaubriand.

As a historian Sainte-Beuve showed remarkable aptitude, but it is as an historian of mental phases, episodes, and general events, rather than of the ebb and flow of outer weal, the conflict of kingdoms and the fortunes of internecine warfare, the rise of this house or that dynasty, the ruin of cities and the growth of States. He could have been neither a Gibbon nor a Niebuhr, neither a Guizot nor a Mommsen, not even a Macaulay or an Ampère; but he is in the domain of historical literature what the author of "The

History of the Rise of Morals in Europe" and "The History of Rationalism" is in the sphere of ethical research, though, of course, there is a radical distinction between the method of Mr. Lecky and that of the author of "Port Royal." To the accomplishment of this immense undertaking Sainte-Beuve brought his inexhaustible patience, his almost unerring faculty of wise discrimination, his precise and scientific method of analysis and exposition, and a style which gave wings to words yoked to dry and apparently outworn subjects. Still, the work is not one that will be widely read a generation hence. Only exhaustive and definitively accurate detail could save from oblivion so lengthy a history on so remote and secondary a subject; and though in its day "Port Royal" fulfilled the need even of the student, scholars now seek their information in the less ambitious but more thorough "studies" of a score of specialists. It may safely be said, however, that no student of Pascal, or of the religious movement in the seventeenth century, will ever be able to dispense with Sainte-Beuve's masterly work.

As the literary critic, as the first who brought into the analysis and exposition of literature the methods of exact science, Sainte-Beuve must always have a high place in the literary history of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, it may be that his chief glory will lie in his having been the pioneer of a new literary art, in his having been the torch-bearer who gave light and direction to many, not heeding much whether his torch, its service done, should thereafter be seldom seen and rarely sought. His example has been of almost inestimable value, and not among his countrymen only. All of the foremost living critics of France, from the eldest and most brilliant, Henri Taine, to Paul Bourget, the late Émile Hennequin, Ernest Tissot, and Charles Morice, have learned much from him—some a life-long lesson, others guiding hints only. As for our own critics, it is, broadly speaking, scarcely to be gainsaid that with us criticism as an art has no acknowledged existence. There are brilliant exceptions who prove the rule, but they are few and their limitations are so marked as for the

most part to deserve the epithet insular.* As for the ordinary criticism in our journals and weekly papers, the less said about it the better for our complacency, since little of good as against a great deal of reprobation would have to be uttered. A change must soon come. Personally, I doubt if it will occur till our utterly mistaken and mischievous system of anonymous reviewing — whether in magazines, weekly papers, or journals — is given up in favour of the more just, more valuable, in every way better habit in vogue among our neighbours. It would be ridiculous to urge that there is no sound and honest criticism among us; but it is hypocritical for those who know better to pretend that unsigned critiques are as free from jealousy, spite, and all uncharitableness, as, for the greater part, these would be if it were not for the shield of anonymity. It has come to this pass, that no one occupied in the literary life ever thinks of paying attention to unsigned reviews, be they in the foremost weeklies or in the provincial press, unless the writers be known. Praise and blame, enthusiasm and indifference—each has to be accepted suspiciously. The result is that literary criticism, instead of being an interpreter and a guide, now to warn and now to allure, is a maker of confusion, a will-o'-the-wisp of judgment, and is no longer hearkened to or followed as of yore. The real cure for this lamentable state of affairs is the cultivation of the literary sentiment, of the feeling of the sacredness of literature; and, thereafter, of scrupulous heed, both on the part of the critics and of the cultured public, for the exemplification of criticism *as an art*. Mere book-noticing, of course, like the poor, we shall have always with us: a circumstance not incompatible with the

* I should like to draw attention here to one of the younger and lesser known critics who are working towards a new science of literary criticism: I allude to Mr. John M. Robertson, whose "Essays towards a Critical Method" (*Fisher Unwin*) is one of the few English studies in literary criticism deserving special attention. No one can read this book of Mr. Robertson's, or Émile Hennequin's "La Critique Scientifique," without realising how limitedly apprehended this new art of criticism is in England.

growth and culture of literary criticism. But possibly the best, perhaps the only feasible means to induce this fortunate result, in the first instance, would be the universal adoption of signed and responsible reviews.

In the "Notes et Rémarques" at the end of the sixteenth volume of the *Causeries du Lundi* occurs the following: "I have given no one the right to say—He belongs to us (*Il est des nôtres*)."
It is this absolute independence, this many-sidedness of Sainte-Beuve, which is one of the secrets of his success. He can be an intellectual comrade of every poet, from the austere Dante to the gay Villon; of every wit and satirist, from Rabelais to Rivarol; of every builder up of ethical systems and every iconoclast of creeds, of the ancient Latins and Greeks as well as of the modern Germans and English; and, moreover, at all times a comrade with an eye to the exact value of and pleasure derivable from his companion of the hour. Here, it seems to me, is his strength and his weakness. He can be *bon camarade* with every one, but he is never able to forget that he is the observer of the thoughts, speech, action, and principles of those with whom he fares. He has charming ruses for evading detection. He will laugh gaily, he will smile, he will allude to this or that scarcely pertinent matter, he will altogether diverge from his subject, he will reintroduce it casually, and possibly dismiss it lightly, and yet he will have had but one aim in view from the outset,—to analyse and estimate the writings of his author, to discover the shaping circumstances of the latter as an individual, to strip him of what is extraneous, and reveal him as he really is,—in a word, to portray him in one composite photograph, to give us a likeness of the man as well as of the author which shall be none the less true because it resolves into definite features the fleeting and indeterminate traits which we perceive now in the one now in the other. He is no believer in the doctrine of the isolation of an author from his writings; it seems as absurd to him as it would be to assert that no notice of the prism may be taken in a study of the chemic action of light passing therethrough. But,

on the other hand, the question arises if Sainte-Beuve is not apt to be misled by his own theory, having to make positive affirmations based on facts necessarily in some degree suppositions. Herein is the hidden reef of literary psychology, and even so great a critic as M. Taine is occasionally missuaded by semblances which he takes for actualities. The elder writer is content to be a careful scientific observer, and delights in artistic demonstration of his newly perceived and otherwise accumulated facts: M. Taine, M. Bourget, and the later literary analysts go further, and wish to reach down through facts to their origins, and to the primary impulsion again of the influences which moulded those origins—and, finally, by cumulative verification to transform hypothesis into demonstrable truth. But, fundamentally, both means are identical; the basis of each is the adoption, for literary research, of the method of exact science. Sainte-Beuve hated fixed judgments; he had none of the arrogances of his critical kindred. He neither said himself, nor cared to hear others saying, that a book was definitively good or definitively bad; he loved the *nuances*, the delicacies and subtleties of criticism, as much as he disliked rigid formulas. Yet his studies in literary psychology, as M. Paul Bourget would call them, are not only acute but are generally profoundly conclusive: it is his suave and winsome manner that makes many think he is too complaisant to be critical, though he has himself said, that in his "Portraits" the praise is conspicuous and the criticism inobtrusive — "*dans mes Portraits, le plus souvent la louange est extérieure, et la critique intestine.*" The *man* himself continually evades us, but the *critic* is always trustworthy. He has, to a phenomenal degree, the delicate *flair* which detects the remotest perfume amid a confusion of fragrances; he knows how to isolate it, how to detach it, how to delight us with it—and then when we are just upon the verge of deeper enjoyment he proves that the scent is not so exquisite in itself after all, but owes much to the blending of the exhalations of neighbouring flowers and blossoms and herbs. While we are still wavering

between conviction and disenchantment, he explains that it has this peculiarity or that, because of the soil whence it derives its nurture, a thin rocky earth or loam of the valley. Then, finally, lest we should turn aside disappointedly, he tells us something about it which we had but half noticed, praises fragrance and bloom again, and with a charming smile gives us the flower to take with us, perchance to press and put away, like sweet-lavender or wild-thyme, a hostage against oblivion of a certain hour, a certain moment of fresh experience.

What range for one man to cover! Let one but glance at the contents of all these volumes: besides this novel, these three collections of poems, here are seven volumes of "Port Royal" (containing a multitude of vignettes and sketches as well as carefully-drawn pictures and portraits), fifteen volumes of the "Causeries du Lundi," volumes upon volumes of "Nouveaux Lundis," "Portraits Littéraires," "Portraits des Contemporains," "Derniers Portraits" and "Portraits des Femmes," this "Tableau historique et critique de la Poésie Française et du Théâtre Français au xvi^e Siècle," these miscellaneous essays and studies. Then those richly suggestive "Notes," and "Thoughts," and "Remarks" must be added, and the recent volume edited by M. Jules Troubat, Sainte-Beuve's latest secretary and "good friend with qualifications," and an "Introduction" here and an "Étude" there. Let us take up M. Charles Pierrot's "Table Générale et Analytique" (forming the appendical volume to the *Causeries du Lundi*), and glance through his painstaking analyses. Sainte-Beuve, we find, has written no fewer than nineteen separate studies on celebrities of the sixteenth century, among them personages so distinct as Rabelais and Casaubon, Marie Stuart and Montaigne; seventy-four upon the great spirits of the seventeenth century, including more than one careful essay upon Pascal; forty-three upon the men of the eighteenth century, comprising Le Sage and Voltaire and Vauvenargues, Rousseau and Diderot and Grimm, men of letters, men of science, philosophers, priests, kings, and diplomatists;

thirty, again, upon those who flourished in the reign of Louis XVI., with vivid portraits of Malesherbes and Necker, Rivarol and Beaumarchais, Condorcet and Bernardin de St. Pierre; eleven not less thorough *études* upon the rarest spirits of the Revolution, Mirabeau and La Fayette, André Chenier, Mme. Roland; and, at last, those brilliant essays upon the makers of our own century, from Napoleon and other generals on the one hand, and from Chateaubriand and Joubert on the other, to Gustave Flaubert, and Taine, and Théodore de Banville;—in all, one hundred and five “portraits” of men and women of the most diverse genius. To these (close upon three hundred, including the not infrequent two or even three essays upon one individual) must be added the studies upon foreign writers of ancient and modern times,—Theocritus and Firdausi, Virgil and Dante, Frederic the Great, Goethe, Gibbon, Cowper,—not to speak of a score or so of essays on various themes, from “Du Génie Critique” in the “Portraits Littéraires” (Tome i.) to “Du Roman Intime” in the “Portraits des Femmes.”

It will readily be understood, therefore, that the essays which succeed these introductory words represent but a fragment of the critical work of Sainte-Beuve. The reader must be generous to the translators, moreover, for the great critic's style does not lend itself to easy reproduction. Yet, though something essential of the charm is lost, enough remains to make a translation from him well worth while; the matter is there, though the charm of manner may escape the ablest interpreter. I cannot honestly say that in these essays Sainte-Beuve is quite as fascinating as in the original; yet they will certainly serve to give the English reader not merely some comprehension of the intellectual range and insight of Sainte-Beuve, but some idea also of his grace of style and individual charm. They have been selected with a view to show his many-sidedness, his genuine sympathies with the most antagonistic types, his delightful method, his guiding principle.

I should like to conclude with a selection from the

several hundred detached "Pensées" of Sainte-Beuve which are often so beautiful, so clever, or so witty, which are always so suggestive; but that is impracticable now. Those who would become more intimate with the man as well as with the writer should turn, in particular, to the two hundred and more "Notes et Pensées" in the eleventh volume of the *Causeries du Lundi*, and to the richly suggestive posthumous collection, "Les Cahiers de Sainte-Beuve." For "finis," however, I may select one, peculiarly apt to the great critic himself, as well as to the epoch. It is the cxxvii. of the "Notes et Pensées:" "Great things may be accomplished in our days, great discoveries for example, great enterprises; but these do not give greatness to our epoch. Greatness is shown especially in its point of departure, in its flexibility, in its thought."

WILLIAM SHARP.



PASCAL.

PASCAL.

IN writing some pages upon Pascal, I labour under a disadvantage ; it is that of having some time ago written a large volume of which he was almost entirely the subject. I shall try, in speaking now to a larger public, of a book which ranks among the classics, to forget what I have written of him that is of too special interest, and to limit myself to what will interest the generality of readers. The excellent work * which I have before me, and in which M. Havet has noted all the anterior labours, will aid me in this.

Pascal was great in heart as well as in mind, which great minds not always are ; and all that he did in the sphere (*ordre*) of the mind and in the sphere of the heart bears a stamp of invention and of originality which attests force, depth, and an ardent, and, so to speak, ravenous pursuit of truth. Born in 1623 of a family full of intelligence and virtue, liberally educated by a father who was himself a superior man ; he had received some admirable gifts—a special genius for arithmetical calculations and mathematical concepts, and an exquisite moral sensibility, which made him a passionate friend of goodness and foe of evil,—greedy of happiness, but of a noble and infinite happiness. His discoveries, even in childhood, are celebrated : wherever he cast his eye, he sought and found something new ; it was easier for him to make discoveries for himself than to study after the way of others. His youth escaped the levities and disorders which are the ordinary peril : his

* Édition nouvelle avec Notes et Commentaires, par M. E. Havet. Dezobry, 1852.

nature, he tells us, was very capable of tempests ; but they spent themselves in the sphere of science, and especially in the order of the religious sentiments. His excessive mental labour had early rendered him subject to a singular nervous malady, which developed still more his keen natural sensibility. The acquaintance which he made with the gentlemen of Port-Royal supplied an aliment to his moral activity ; and their doctrine, which was something new and bold, became for him a starting-point whence he set out in his own original way for a complete reconstruction of the moral and religious world. A sincere and passionate Christian, he conceived an apology—a defence of religion by a method and by reasons which no one had yet discovered, and which was to carry defeat to the very heart of the sceptic. When thirty years old he applied himself to that work with the fire and precision which he put into everything : new and graver physical disorders, which supervened, prevented him from executing it continuously, but he returned to it at every opportunity in the intervals of his pains ; he threw upon paper his ideas, his views, his flashes. Dying at thirty-nine (1662), he was unable to arrange them in order ; and his *Thoughts on Religion*, prepared by his family and friends, did not appear till seven or eight years afterward.

What was the character of that first edition of the *Thoughts* ? One conceives it without difficulty, even though he may not have the proof from the originals. That first edition did not contain all that he had left ; only the principal pieces were published in it, and in those that were published, scruples of various kinds, whether doctrinal or grammatical, caused certain passages to be corrected, softened, or explained, in which the vivacity and impatience of the author had been manifested in observations too blunt or too concise, and in a decisive style which, in such a matter, might be compromising.

In the eighteenth century, Voltaire and Condorcet seized upon some of the *Thoughts* of Pascal, as in war one tries to profit by the too advanced movements of a daring and

rash hostile general. Pascal was only daring, not rash : but, since I have compared him to a general, I will add that he was a general who was killed in the very moment of his operation ; it remained unfinished, and, in part, exposed.

In our day, in restoring the true text of Pascal, in giving his phrases in all their simplicity, with their firm and precise beauty, and also with their defiant boldness, and their everywhere singular familiarity, one has returned to a juster point of view, not at all hostile. M. Cousin was the first to urge that work of completely restoring Pascal, in 1843 ; M. Faugère has the merit of having executed it in 1844. Thanks to him, we have now the *Thoughts* of Pascal in conformity with the manuscripts themselves. This is the text which a very distinguished young professor, M. Havet, has just published in his turn, accompanying it with all the necessary helps, explanations, comparisons, commentaries ; he has given a learned edition, and one that is truly classical in the best sense of the word.

Being unable to enter fully into the examination of Pascal's method, I would like to insist here, after the style of M. Havet, upon a single point, and show how, in spite of all the changes that have supervened in the world and in ideas, in spite of the repugnance which is more and more felt to certain views peculiar to the author of the *Thoughts*, we are to-day in a better position to sympathize with Pascal than one was in the time of Voltaire ; how that which in Pascal scandalized Voltaire, scandalizes us less than the beautiful and heartfelt passages, which are close to it, touch and ravish us. The reason is, that Pascal is not simply a reasoner, a man who presses his adversary in all directions, who defies him upon a thousand points which are commonly the pride and glory of the understanding ; Pascal is at once a soul which suffers, which has felt, and which expresses its struggle and its agony.

There were unbelievers in the time of Pascal ; the sixteenth century had engendered a sufficiently large number of them, especially among the lettered classes ; they were

pagans, more or less sceptical, of whom Montaigne is for us the most graceful type, and whose race we see continued in Charron, La Mothe-le-Vayer, Gabriel-Naudé. But these learned and sceptical men, as well as the freethinkers, who were simply intellectual people and men of the world, like Theophile or Des Barreaux, took things little to heart; whether they persevered in their incredulity or were converted at the hour of death, we do not perceive in them that profound inquietude which attests a moral nature of a high order, and a mental nature stamped with the seal of the archangel; they are not, in a word, to speak like Plato, royal natures. Pascal is of this leading and glorious race; he has more than one sign of it in his heart and on his brow: he is one of the noblest of mortals, but he is sick, and he would be cured. He was the first man to introduce into the defence of religion the ardour, the anguish, and the lofty melancholy which others carried later into scepticism.

"I blame equally," he says, "those who take part in praising man, those who take part in blaming him, and those who make it a business to amuse themselves; and I can approve only those who *seek the truth with groans.*"

The method he employs in his *Thoughts* to combat unbelievers, and especially to rouse the indifferent man, and to excite desire in his heart, is full of originality and novelty. One knows how he begins. He takes man in the midst of nature, in the bosom of the infinite; considering him by turns in relation to the immensity of the heavens and in relation to the atom, he shows him alternately great and small, suspended between two infinities, between two abysses. The French language has no more beautiful pages than the simple and severe lines of that incomparable picture. Looking at man inwardly as he has looked at him outwardly, Pascal tries to show in the mind itself two other abysses,—on one side an elevation toward God, toward the morally beautiful, a return movement toward an illustrious origin, and on the other side an abasement in the direction of evil, a kind of criminal attraction to vice. This, no doubt, is the Christian idea of the original corruption and

of the Fall ; but Pascal, as he employs it, pushes it to such an extreme, and carries it so far, that he makes it in some sort his own : at the very beginning, he makes man a monster, a chimera, something incomprehensible. He makes the knot and ties it in an insoluble manner, in order that, later, only a God, descending like a sword, can cut it.

In order to vary the reading of Pascal, I have given myself the satisfaction of re-reading, along with his *Thoughts*, some pages of Bossuet and of Fenelon. I have taken Fenelon in the treatise *On the Existence of God*, and Bossuet in the treatise *On the Knowledge of God and of One's Self* ; and without seeking to investigate the difference (if there be any) of doctrine, I have noticed, before all, that of character and of genius.

Fenelon, as one knows, begins by seeking his proofs of the existence of God in the general aspect of the universe, in the spectacle of the marvels which manifest themselves in all the orders of creation ; the stars, the different elements, the structure of the human body, all are to him a path by which to rise from contemplation of the work and from admiration of the art to a knowledge of the workman. There is a plan, and there are laws ; then there is an architect and a legislator. There are visible ends, then there is a supreme design. After having confidently accepted this mode of interpretation by external things and the demonstration of God by nature, Fenelon, in the second part of his treatise, enters upon another order of proofs ; he admits of philosophical doubt touching things without, and shuts himself up within himself to arrive at the same end by another road, and to demonstrate God's existence simply by the nature of our ideas. But in admitting the universal doubt of the philosophers, he is not frightened by this state of the case ; he describes it slowly, almost complacently ; he is neither hurried nor impatient, nor does he suffer like Pascal ; he is not what Pascal in his search appears at the very first, that lost traveller who yearns for home, who, lost without a guide in a dark forest, takes many times the wrong road, goes, returns upon his steps,

is discouraged, sits down at a crossing of the roads, utters cries to which no one responds, resumes his march with frenzy and pain, is lost again, throws himself upon the ground and wants to die, and reaches home at last only after all sorts of anxieties and after sweating blood.

Fenelon, in his easy, gradual, and measured march, has nothing like this. It is true that at the moment when he asks whether all nature is not a phantom, and when, to be logical, he puts himself in the position of absolute doubt, it is very true that he says to himself: "This state of suspense astonishes and frightens me; it throws me within myself, into a solitude that is profound and full of horror; it constrains me, it keeps me as it were in the air; it cannot endure, I admit; but it is the only reasonable state." At the moment when he says this, we see clearly, from the very manner in which he speaks, and the lightness of the expression, that he is not seriously frightened. A little further on, addressing himself to reason, and apostrophizing it, he demands of it: "How long shall I be in this state of doubt, which is a kind of torment, and is, nevertheless, the only use I can make of reason?" This doubt which is a kind of torment to Fenelon, is never admitted as a gratuitous supposition by Pascal; and in reality it appears to him the worst torture, that which is utterly abhorrent and revolting to nature itself. Fenelon, in placing himself in this state of doubt, after the manner of Descartes, assures himself first of his own existence and of the actuality of certain primary ideas. He continues in this way of broad, agreeable, and easy deduction, mingled here and there with little bursts of affection, but without any storms of soul. One thinks he perceives, in reading him, a light, angelic nature, which has but to let itself go, to remount of itself to its celestial principle. The whole is crowned with a prayer addressed to the infinite and good God, to whom he abandons himself with confidence, if sometimes his words have betrayed him: "Pardon these errors, O Goodness, who art not less infinite than all the other perfections of my God; pardon the stammerings of a tongue which cannot

abstain from praising you, and the failings of a mind which you have made only to admire your perfection."

Nothing less resembles Pascal than this smooth and easy way. We hear nowhere the cry of distress; and Fenelon, in adoring the cross, does not cling to it, like Pascal, as to a mast in shipwreck.

Pascal, at the very outset, begins by rejecting the proofs of God's existence which are drawn from nature: "I admire," says he, ironically, "the boldness with which these persons undertake to speak of God, in addressing their discourses to the ungodly. Their first chapter is devoted to proving the existence of Deity by the works of nature." Continuing to develop his thought, he maintains that these discourses, which attempt to demonstrate God's existence by the works of nature, have really no effect except upon the faithful and those who already adore Him. As for the other class, the indifferent, those who are destitute of living faith and graces, "to say to these persons that they have only to see the least of the things that surround them, and they will see God revealed, and to give them, as complete proof regarding that great and important subject, the course of the moon or the planets, and to pretend that one has finished his proof with such a discourse, is to give them occasion to believe that the proofs of our religion are very weak; and I see, by reason and by experience, that nothing is fitter to inspire them with contempt for it."

One may clearly judge by this passage how far Pascal neglected and even rejected with disdain half-proofs; and moreover he showed himself here more exacting than the Scripture itself, which says in a celebrated psalm: *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work," etc.

It is curious to remark that the slightly contemptuous phrase of Pascal: "I admire the boldness with which," etc., was originally printed in the first edition of his *Thoughts*, and the National Library has possessed for a short time a

unique copy, dated 1669, in which one reads verbatim this phrase (page 150). But soon the friends, or the examiners and approvers of the book, were alarmed to see this exclusive way of proceeding, which was found here in contradiction to the Sacred Books; they took a proof before the work was published; they softened the phrase, and presented Pascal's idea with an air of precaution which the vigorous writer never assumes, even with regard to his friends and his auxiliaries. The single remark upon which I wish to insist here, is the open opposition of Pascal to that which will soon be the method of Fenelon. Fenelon, serene, confident, and tormented by no doubts, sees the admirable order of a starry night, and says with the Magi or the Prophet, with the Chaldean shepherd: "How powerful and wise must He be who makes worlds as innumerable as the grains of sand that cover the sea-shore, and who leads all these wandering worlds without difficulty, during so many ages, as a shepherd leads a flock!" Pascal considers the same sparkling night, and he perceives beyond it a void which his geometrical genius cannot fill; he cries: "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me." Like a sublime and wounded eagle he flies beyond the visible sun, and, athwart its pale rays, he goes to seek, without attaining it, a new and eternal aurora. His plaint and his dread come from finding only silence and night.

With Bossuet, the contrast of method would not be less striking. Though in his Treatise on *The Knowledge of God*, the great prelate would not address himself to the young Dauphin, his pupil, and though he would speak to any reader whatever, he could not do otherwise. Bossuet takes his pen, and sets forth, with a lofty tranquillity, the points of doctrine, the double nature of man; the noble origin, the excellence and the immortality of the spiritual principle that is in him, and his direct connection with God. Bossuet teaches like the greatest of bishops; he is seated in his pulpit, he is reclining there. It is not a restless nor a sorrowful person who seeks, it is a master who indicates and establishes, the way. He demonstrates and

develops the entire order of his discourse and of his conception without struggle and without effort: he experiences no pains in proving his point. He only in some way explores and promulgates the things of the mind, like a sure man who has not fought for a long time the internal fights; it is the man of all authorities and of all stabilities who speaks, and who takes pleasure in viewing order everywhere or in immediately re-establishing it by his word. Pascal insists upon the discord and upon the disorder inherent, according to him, in all nature. There, where the other extends and displays the august method of his teaching, he shows his wounds and his blood, and so far as he is more extravagant, he resembles us more nearly, he touches us more.

It is not that Pascal puts himself completely on a level with him whom he reclaims and directs. Without being a bishop or a priest, he is himself sure of what he says, he knows his end in advance, and lets his certainty, his disdains, his impatience, be plainly seen; he scolds, he rallies, he abuses the man who resists and who does not hear; but suddenly charity or frankness of nature gains the day; his despotic airs have ceased; he speaks in his own name and in the name of all; and he associates himself with the soul in pain, which is henceforth only the lively image of himself and of us also.

Bossuet does not spurn the glimmerings or the helps of the ancient philosophy, he does not insult it; according to him, all that which leads to the idea of the intellectual and spiritual life, all that aids in the exercise and development of the elevated part of ourselves, by which we are conformed to the First Being,—all this is good, and every time that an illustrious truth appears to us, we have a foretaste of that superior existence to which the rational creature is originally destined. In his magnificent language, Bossuet loves to associate, to unite the greatest names, and to weave in some sort the golden chain by which the human understanding reaches to the highest summit. This passage of sovereign beauty must be cited:

“He who sees Pythagoras, when ravished at having found the squares of the sides of an uncertain triangle, sacrifice a hecatomb in thanksgiving; he who sees Archimedes, intent on some new discovery, forgetting to eat and drink; he who sees Plato celebrate the felicity of those who contemplate the beautiful and the good, first in the arts, secondly in nature, and finally in their source and their beginning, which is God; he who sees Aristotle praise those happy moments when the soul is possessed only of the knowledge of virtue, and judge no other life to be worthy of being eternal, and of being the life of God; but (above all) he who sees the saints so ravished with that divine exercise of knowing, loving, and praising God, that they never abandon it, and that they extinguish all sensual desires in order to continue it during all the days of their lives;—he who sees, I say, all these things, recognises in intellectual operations the principle and practice of a life eternally happy.”

That which leads Bossuet to God is rather the principle of human greatness than the sentiment of misery. He has a contemplation which rises gradually from truth to truth, which has not to stoop incessantly from abyss to abyss. He has just painted to us that spiritual enjoyment of the highest kind, which begins with Pythagoras and Archimedes, passes on to Aristotle, and reaches and ascends even to the Saints; he seems himself, as seen in this last example, only to have ascended a degree nearer to the altar.

Pascal does not proceed thus; he strives to mark more clearly, and in an impassible manner, the difference of the spheres. He despises whatever there might have been in the ancient philosophy that was gradual and introductory to Christianity. The learned and moderate Daguesseau, in a plan of a work which he proposed to write after the style of the *Thoughts*, could say: “If one should undertake to work up the *Thoughts* of Pascal, it would be necessary to rectify in many places the imperfect ideas which he gives in it of the pagan philosophy; the true religion has no need to suppose, in its adversaries or in its rivals, faults which are not theirs.” Confronted with Bossuet, Pascal may exhibit, at the first glance, some austerities and a narrowness of doctrine which offend us. Not content to believe with Bossuet and Fenelon, and with all Christians, in an unseen God, he loves to insist upon the mysterious

character of that obscurity ; he is pleased to declare expressly that God wishes to blind some and to enlighten others. He goes and dashes himself, at times, *s'acheurter* (that is his word), on rocks which it is wiser, as respects reason, and even as respects faith, to go round than to lay bare and openly announce ; he will say, for example, of the prophecies cited in the Gospel : " You believe that they are reported to make you believe. No, it is to keep you from believing." He will say of miracles : " Miracles do not serve to convert, but to condemn." Like a too intrepid guide in a mountain journey, he purposely keeps close to the steeps and the precipices ; one would think that he wished to defy giddiness. Pascal also, contrarily to Bossuet, is smitten with affection for little churches, for little reserved flocks of the elect, which leads to sectarianism : " I love," he says, " the worshippers unknown to the world and even to the Prophets." But along with and amid these roughnesses and these asperities of the way, what piercing words ! what cries that touch us ! what sensible truths for all those who have suffered, who have desired, lost, then re-found the way, and who have never been willing to despair ! " It is good," he cries, " to be wearied and fatigued by the useless search for the true good, that we may stretch out our arms to the Deliverer !" No one, better than he, has made men feel what faith is ; perfect faith is " God perceptible to the heart, not to the reason. How far it is," says he, " from knowing God to loving him !"

This affectionate quality of Pascal, making its way through all that is bitter and severe in his doctrine and conduct, has so much the more charm and authority. The touching manner in which that great mind, suffering and praying, speaks to us of that which is most peculiar in religion, of Jesus Christ in person, is fitted to win all hearts, to inspire them with I know not what that is profound, and to impress them for ever with a tender respect. One may remain an unbeliever after having read Pascal, but is no longer permitted to rail or to blaspheme ; and, in

that sense, it remains true that he has vanquished, on one aide, the mind of the eighteenth century and Voltaire.

In a passage previously unpublished, and of which the publication is due to M. Faugère, Pascal meditates upon the agony of Jesus Christ, upon the torments which that perfectly heroic soul, so firm when it wishes to be so, inflicted upon Himself in the name and for the sake of all men : and here, in some verses of meditation and prayer by turns, Pascal penetrates into the mystery of that suffering with a passionateness, a tenderness, a piety, to which no human soul can remain insensible. He supposes all at once a dialogue in which the dying Deity begins to speak, and addresses His disciple, saying to him :

“Console thyself; thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me. Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou didst not possess Me; then do not disquiet thyself.”

“I thought of thee in thy agony; I shed such drops of blood for thee.”

“Wouldst thou that it should always cost Me the blood of My humanity, without thy shedding some tears? . . .”

This passage should be read in full and in its place. J. J. Rousseau could not have heard it, I dare believe, without bursting into sobs, and perhaps falling upon his knees. It is by such burning, passionate passages, in which human charity breathes through the divine love, that Pascal has a stronger hold upon us to-day than any other apologist of his time. There is in that grief, in that passion, in that ardour, more than enough to atone for his harshnesses and extravagances of doctrine. Pascal is at once more violent than Bossuet and more sympathetic with us; he is more our contemporary in sentiment. The same day in which one has read *Childe Harold* or *Hamlet*, *René* or *Werther*, one will read Pascal, and he will enable us to cope with them, or rather he will make us perceive and comprehend a moral ideal and a beauty of heart which they all lack, and which, once caught sight of, is a despair also. It is already an honour for man to have such despairs regarding objects so high.

Some curious and some learned persons will continue to study all of Pascal thoroughly ; but the resultant which appears to-day good and useful for minds simply serious and for honest hearts,—the advice which I come to give them after having read this last edition of the *Thoughts*,—is, not to pretend to penetrate too far into Pascal the individual and the Jansenist, to content one's self with divining him, and understanding him on that side, in some essential points, but to confine one's self with him to the spectacle of the moral struggle, of the tempest, and of the passion which he feels for goodness and for a worthy happiness. Dealing with him in this way, we shall sufficiently resist his somewhat narrow, opinionated, and absolute logic ; we shall lay ourselves open meanwhile to that flame, to that soaring disposition, to all that is tender and generous in him ; we shall associate ourselves without difficulty with that ideal of moral perfection which he personifies so ardently in Jesus Christ, and we shall feel that we have been elevated in the hours which we shall have passed face to face with that athlete, that martyr, and that hero of the invisible moral world : Pascal is for us all that.

The world moves on ; it develops itself more and more in the ways which seem most opposed to those of Pascal, in the sense of positive interests, of physical nature investigated and subjected, and of human triumphs through industry. It is good that there should be somewhere a counterpoise ; that, in some solitary closets, without pretending to protest against the movement of the age, some firm spirits, generous and not bitter, should say to themselves what is wanting to it, and in what direction it might complete and crown itself. Such reservoirs of lofty thoughts are necessary that the habit may not be absolutely lost, and that the practical may not use up the whole man. Human society, and, to take a plainer example, French society, appears to me sometimes like an indefatigable traveller who makes his journey and pursues his way in more than one costume, very often changing his name and dress. Since the Revolution (1789) we have been up and marching on : where

are we going? who will tell us? but we are marching on incessantly. That Revolution, at the moment when one believed it arrested under one form, rose and pushed on under another: sometimes under the military uniform, sometimes under the black coat of the deputy; yesterday as a proletary, day before yesterday as a citizen. To-day it is, before all, industrial; and it is the engineer who leads and who triumphs. Let us not complain at all of this, but let us recollect the other side of ourselves, that which has so long formed the dearest honour of humanity. Let us go and see London, let us go visit and admire the Crystal Palace and its marvels, let us enrich it and make it proud with our products: yes, but on the way, on the return, let some persons repeat to themselves with Pascal these words which should be engraved on the frontispiece:

“All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not worth so much as the smallest of minds; for it knows all them and itself; and the bodies, nothing. All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their productions, are not worth the least movement of charity; that belongs to an order infinitely higher.

“From all bodies together one could not succeed in producing one little thought; that is impossible, and of another order. From all bodies and minds one could not obtain one movement of true charity; that is impossible, and of another supernatural order.”

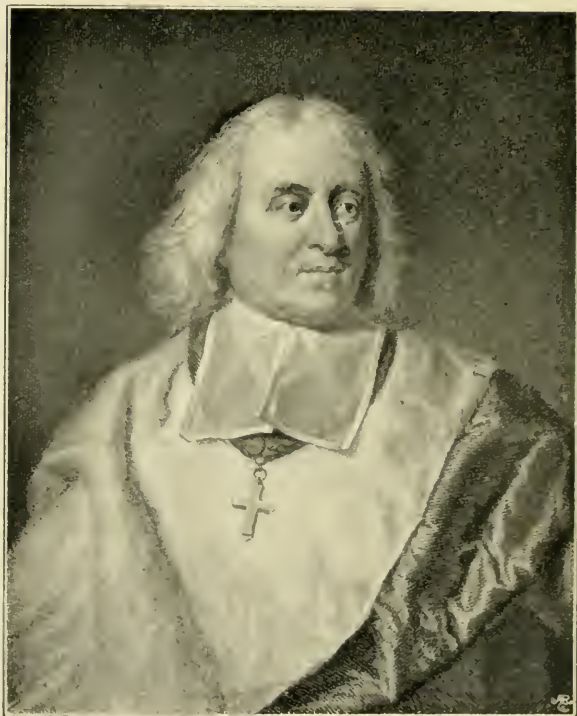
It is thus that Pascal expresses himself in these brief and concise *Thoughts*, written for himself, a little abrupt, and which have sprung, as in a jet, from the very spring.

The present editor, M. Havet, has treated me with so much indulgence in a page of his Introduction, that, in concluding, I am somewhat embarrassed in coming to praise in my turn; he appears to me, however, to have proposed to himself and to have attained the principal end which I have indicated, and his learned edition is a service rendered to all. The philosophic and independent character which he has been anxious to give it cannot alter its value, and it rather adds to it in my eyes. Pascal's book, in the state in which it has come to us, and with the licence or the looseness of the recent restitutions, cannot be for any one an exact and complete apologetic work: it can

be only an ennobling kind of reading, which brings back the soul into the moral and religious sphere whence too many vulgar interests cause it to fall away. M. Havet has been constantly careful to maintain this lofty impression, and to disembarass it from the sectarian questions in which Pascal's personal doctrines might involve it. His conclusion sums up well the very spirit of all his labour: "In general," says M. Havet, "we men of to-day, in our manner of understanding life, are wiser than Pascal; but if we would be able to boast of it, we should be, at the same time, like him, pure, disinterested, charitable."

BOSSUET.

THE glory of Bossuet has become one of the religions of France; we recognise it, we proclaim it, we honour ourselves by paying to it daily a new tribute, by finding new reasons for its existence and for its increase; we no longer discuss it. It is the privilege of true greatness to become more conspicuous in proportion as one draws away from it, and to command attention at a distance. What is singular, however, in this fortune and in this kind of apotheosis of Bossuet, is that he becomes thus greater and greater to us, while, for all that, we do not necessarily admit that he was right in some of the most important controversies in which he was engaged. You love Fenelon, you cherish his graces, his noble and fine insinuation, his chaste elegances; you could easily pardon him what are called his errors; and Bossuet has combated those errors, not only forcibly, but furiously, with a kind of roughness. No matter! the loud voice of the adversary transports you in spite of yourself, and compels you to bow your head, without regard to your secret affection for him whom he beats down. So with the long and obstinate pitched battles which have been fought upon the Gallican question. Are you a Gallican, or are you not? According to your belief, you applaud or you heave a sigh at this part of his career, but his illustrious course none the less, as a whole, maintains in your eyes its elevation and its majesty. I shall dare to say the same thing of the war without truce which Bossuet waged against Protestantism in all its forms. Every enlightened Protestant, while reserving the historic points, will acknowledge with respect that he has never encountered two such adver-



BOSSUET.

saries. In politics also, though one may not be very partial to the sacred theory and to divine right, as Bossuet revives and establishes it, one would be almost sorry if that doctrine had not found so plain, so manly, so sincere a spokesman, and one, too, so naturally convinced of its truth. A God, a Christ, a bishop, a king,—here, in its entirety, is the luminous sphere in which the thought of Bossuet expands and reigns ; this is his ideal of the world. So, that there was in antiquity a people set apart, who, under the inspiration and leadership of Moses, kept clear and distinct the idea of a creative and ever-present God, directly governing the world, while all the surrounding peoples strayed away from that idea, which was obscure to them, into the mists of fancy, or smothered it under the phantoms of the imagination and drowned it in the exuberant luxury of nature,—this simple idea of order, of authority, of unity, of the continual government of Providence, Bossuet among the moderns has grasped more completely than any other person, and he applies it on all occasions without effort, and, as it were, by an invincible deduction. Bossuet's is the Hebrew genius extended, fecundated by Christianity, and open to all the acquisitions of the understanding, but retaining some degree of sovereign interdiction, and closing its vast horizon precisely where its light ceases. In gesture and tone he reminds one of Moses ; in his speech there are mingled some of the expressions of the Prophet-King,—bursts of intense and sublime pathos ; it is a voice pre-eminently eloquent,—the simplest, the strongest, the bluntest, the most familiar,—one that thunders with a peculiar suddenness. Even when he rolls along with an unbending current and an imperious flood, his eloquence carries with it treasures of an eternal human morality. It is in all these qualities that we regard him as unparalleled, and whatever the use he makes of his speech, he remains the model of the highest eloquence and of the most beautiful language. These truths are no longer novel : how many times have we heard them ! The two works we announce do no more than set forth and develop them, each

in its own way. M. de Lamartine has traced in the first pages of his study a portrait of Bossuet thus grandly conceived. M. Poujoulat, in a series of Letters addressed to a foreign politician, tries to show that Bossuet is not only great in the celebrated works of his which one commonly reads, but that he is the same man and the same genius in his entire habit of thought, and in the mass of his productions. A conscientious writer, accustomed to historical labours, to those which touch upon the history of religion in particular, M. Poujoulat writes with a pen that is as grave as the thought.* He states that he has re-read in the country the works of Bossuet, and that he has taken pleasure, after each reading, in gathering his reflections in the form of letters to a friend: one may profitably run over with him the series of Sermons and Theological Treatises, which all contain such real beauties. His work inspires esteem. To comment on Bossuet is, in the long run, a difficult and even dangerous task; the citations which one makes speak for themselves, and light up certain pages to such an extent as to dim everything that adjoins them. M. Poujoulat has very happily escaped this danger by a great fidelity in exposition, and by a sincerity of belief which has permitted him to enter into the discussion of principles. Discussion, perhaps, is a good deal to say; it is not necessary, at least, to understand it in a historic or philosophic sense; it is evident that upon a multitude of points which give occasion for it, M. Poujoulat writes with all the confidence and all the security of French convictions, which do not sufficiently suspect the nature and the force of the objections put forth by a more independent and more extensive critical science. But morally he regains his superiority; he labours constantly to render his commentary useful by applying it to our own times, to ourselves, to the vices of society, and to the disease of our hearts: "Bossuet is especially the man of the age we live in," he thinks; and he gives the reasons for this opinion, which

* *Lettres sur Bossuet à un Homme d'État*, par M. Poujoulat, 1854
Portrait de Bossuet, par M. de Lamartine, 1854.

are rather honourable desires on his part, than facts manifest to all.

It would be easy here to bring him into conflict with M. de Lamartine, who, all the while that he admires Bossuet, is of a contrary opinion; but I may be permitted rather to turn aside some time from the commentators and the painters, that I may go straight to the master. Upon Bossuet there is a work still to be done, a work which will exhaust all that may be positively and precisely known of him. M. de Bausset, forty years ago, gave an agreeable History of Bossuet, rich even in details, and which, in certain respects, will not be improved; but in many passages there is room for further researches, and for the investigations which distinguished men of letters and academicians then willingly spared themselves. To these investigations and researches, at once pious and indefatigable, a scholar of our day, M. Floquet, has devoted himself for several years, and the *History of Bossuet* which will result from them, will soon appear. This will be a solid and final basis for the study and admiration of the great man. Meanwhile I have under my eyes an exceedingly commendable work of a young man of merit, who died a short time ago. The Abbé Victor Vaillant, having to give in to the Paris Faculty of Lettres, in 1851, his thesis as doctor, chose for his theme, *A Study on the Sermons of Bossuet according to the manuscripts*. He showed that those sermons, so well appreciated by the Abbé Maury at the first moment of their publication (1772), had not been given to the public then, nor reprinted since, with all the exactness which might have been demanded. Criticising the first editor, Dom Déforis, with an extreme severity, repeated and in part imitated by that of M. Cousin toward the first editors of Pascal's *Thoughts*, the Abbé Vaillant applied himself afterward to something more useful, that is to say, to discovering the chronological order of Bossuet's Sermons and Panegyrics; looking into the matter closely, he succeeded in determining the dates of a good number of them, at least approximately. From to-day, then, we may

study Bossuet confidently in his first manner; we are able, as in the case of the great Corneille, to follow the progress and the march of that genius which went on magnifying and perfecting itself, but which had no decline or decay. I will try to give an idea of that first manner by some examples.

Bossuet, born at Dijon on the twenty-seventh of September, 1627, of a good and ancient plebeian family of magistrates and parliamentarians, was reared there in the midst of books and in the family library. His father, who had entered the Parliament of Metz, lately created, as dean of the councillors, left his children in the care of a brother who was a councillor in the Parliament of Dijon. Young Bossuet, who remained in his uncle's house, was educated at the Jesuit College of the City. He distinguished himself early by a surprising capacity of memory and of understanding; he knew Virgil by heart, as, a little later, he knew Homer. "One comprehends less easily," says M. de Lamartine, "how he was infatuated all his life with the Latin poet Horace, an exquisite but refined genius, the cords of whose lyre are only the softest fibres of the heart; an indolent voluptuary," etc. M. de Lamartine, who has so well perceived the leading qualities of Bossuet's eloquence and talent, has studied his life a little too lightly, and has here supposed a difficulty which does not exist; in fact, there is no mention anywhere of that inexplicable predilection of Bossuet for Horace, the least divine of all the poets. M. de Lamartine must have inadvertently read Horace instead of *Homer*, and he has taken occasion to treat Homer, the friend of good sense, almost as badly as he formerly treated *La Fontaine*.* It was Fenelon (and not Bossuet) who read and relished Horace, more

* M. de Lamartine, let us say it once for all, is so careless in regard to such matters of fact, he possesses in so high a degree the gift of inaccuracy, that he has been able, in enumerating the friends of Bossuet, in his final article (*Constitutionnel*, April 25, 1854), to write freely: "Pellisson, precursor of Boileau! La Bruyère, precursor of Molière!!!" One pardons him all that on account of his swan's pen.

than any other poet, who knew him by heart, who quoted him incessantly, who, in his correspondence, during his last years, with M. Destouches, made a kind of pleasant wager, that he would beat, refute, and incessantly correct his friend with well-chosen quotations from the Satires or the Epistles. Once more, Horace has nothing in particular to do with Bossuet, and there is no occasion to implicate him on his account. The great pagan preference of Bossuet (if one may use such an expression) was naturally for Homer, and next for Virgil: Horace, according to his judgment and taste, came far behind them. But the book which soon pre-eminently gave direction to the genius and calling of Bossuet, and became his rule in everything, was the Bible; it is said that the first time he read it, he was completely illuminated and transported. He had found in it the source whence his own genius was going to flow, like one of the four rivers in Genesis.

Bossuet was early destined to the church: tonsured when eight years old, he was hardly thirteen when he was made a canon of the cathedral at Metz. His childhood and his youth were so regular and pure, and pointed so directly to the church as his destination, that Lamartine says: "There is no trace of a fault to be seen in his childhood, or of an act of levity in his youth; he seemed to escape the frailties of nature without a struggle, and to have no other passion than love for the beautiful and the good (and the true). One would have said that he himself respected in advance the future authority of his name, of his ministry, and that he was anxious that there should not be a human spot to wipe away from the man of God, when he should leave the world to enter upon the duties of the tabernacle." Why does M. de Lamartine, who discovers on his way these charming views and these glimpses of a superior biographer, let them escape, through his negligence, and almost immediately spoil them?

Bossuet came to Paris for the first time in September, 1642. It is said that on the very day of his arrival he saw the entry of the dying cardinal, who was returning to Paris

after his avenging journey to the South, and was carried in a moveable room covered with a scarlet cloth. To have seen, but for a day, Richelieu all-powerful in his purple, and to have seen, soon after, the Fronde, civil war and anarchy let loose, was for Bossuet an abridged course of political philosophy, from which he drew the true lesson: better, surely, one master than a thousand masters, and better still that the master should be the King himself, and not the minister.

Entering upon a course of philosophy at the college of Navarre, he shone there in the theses and public performances; he was a prodigy and a school angel before becoming the eagle we admire. It is known that, having been extolled at the *hôtel de Rambouillet* by the Marquis de Feuquières, who had known his father at Metz, and who continued his good will to the son, the young Bossuet was conducted there one evening, to preach an improvised sermon. In consenting to these singular exercises, and to these tournaments where his person and his gifts were challenged, and though treated as an intellectual virtuoso in the *salons* of the *hôtel de Rambouillet* and the *hôtel de Nevers*, Bossuet did not apparently subject himself to the slightest charge of vanity, and there is no example of a precocious genius which has been so praised and so caressed by the world, which has remained so perfectly exempt from all self-love and from all coquetry.

He went often to Metz, to rest in study and in a more austere life from the successes and triumphs at Paris. He there successively became subdeacon, deacon, archdeacon, and priest (1652). In Metz he remained wholly for about six years, in order that he might diligently discharge the duties of archdeacon and canon; there he preached the first sermons we have from him, and his first panegyrics. There, too, made his first controversial attacks upon the Protestants, who abounded in that province. In a word, Bossuet conducted himself like a young militant priest, who, instead of accepting at first an agreeable post at the centre and in the capital, loves better to inure and harden

himself by carrying the arms of eloquence where duty and danger lie, to the frontiers.

One of the earliest sermons of Bossuet, and one of those which he preached in his youth at Metz, has been signalized by the Abbé Vaillant: it is the sermon for the ninth Sunday after Pentecost. In this sermon Bossuet wishes to show at once the goodness and the rigour of God, the tenderness and the severity of Jesus. He begins by exhibiting Jesus as compassionate, and weeping over Jerusalem, at the moment when He re-enters the city which is going to betray Him; then he will show Him irritated and implacable, avenging Himself, or letting His Father avenge Him, upon the walls and upon the children of that same Jerusalem. This sermon,—preached “as God inspired me,” says Bossuet in concluding it,—has in it something youthful, vivid, and bold, and, in passages, something hazardous and almost strange. He begins grandly and with a noble similitude: “As one sees that brave soldiers, in certain remote places, where the various chances of war may have thrown them, do not neglect to march at the appointed times to the rendezvous of their brigades appointed by the general; so, the Saviour Jesus, when He saw that His hour was come, resolved to quit all the other countries of Palestine through which He had gone preaching the word of life; and knowing well that it was the will of His Father that He should return to Jerusalem, in order to undergo there, a few days after, the anguish of the last suffering, He turned His steps toward that treacherous city, that He might celebrate there that Passover, which has been made for ever memorable by the institution of His holy mysteries and by the shedding of His blood.” And it is then, while Jesus is descending the Mount of Olives, that he represents Him as touched to the quick in His heart with a tender compassion, and weeping over the ungrateful city whose ruin He sees beforehand; then suddenly, without transition, and with an abrupt sally, which may seem to indicate a still juvenile erudition, Bossuet attacks the heresy of the *Marcionites*, who, not

knowing how to reconcile goodness and justice in one God, divided the divine nature, and made two Gods: one, purely idle and useless, after the manner of the Epicureans, "a God under whose rule sins rejoice," whom one has since called the God of honest people; and over against that God, indulgent to excess, they framed another, purely vengeful, purely wicked and cruel: and pushing the conclusion to the limit, they also imagined two Christs in the image of the two Fathers. After having addressed the heretic Marcion to his face (in the words of Tertullian), "Thou dost not stray so far from the truth, Marcion, . . ." he enters upon his theme, and shows that this compassion and this justice both subsist, but must not be separated; he proceeds in the same discourse to portray the Saviour compassionate and the Saviour inexorable, the pitying heart and then the angry heart of Jesus: "Hear, first of all, the sweet and benignant voice of that Lamb without spot, and afterward you shall hear the terrible roarings of that victorious Lion born of the tribe of Judah: that is the subject of this discourse."

In this exordium we see a singular fire, an ingenious and exuberant imagination, a slightly subtle erudition, which attacks at the outset a strange heresy; as Chateaubriand said, we see "the foam on the bit of the young courser."

The first head of the discourse in which the orator glorifies the goodness of Jesus, so consistent with his true nature, is characterized by leaps and flights, by vivid and impetuous terms, by significant words which force home the thought; a little archaism mingles with the style: "And touching that (compassion), I recollect," says the orator, "a little saying of Saint Peter's, in which he very well describes the Saviour to Cornelius: 'Jesus of Nazareth,' says he, 'a man approved of God, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed.' *Pertransit benefaciendo*. . . . O God! how beautiful these words, and how eminently worthy of my Saviour!" He then unfolds the beauty of these words in a paraphrase

or strophe full of joyousness. He calls to mind Pliny the Younger glorifying his Trajan who travelled over the world less by his footsteps than by his victories: "And what does this mean, think you,—to travel over provinces by victories? Is it not to carry carnage and pillage everywhere? Ah! in how much more lovely a way did my Saviour travel over Judea! He travelled over it less by His steps than by His kindnesses. He went about in all directions, healing the sick, consoling the wretched, instructing the ignorant. It was not simply the places at which He tarried that found themselves the better for His presence: as many as were His steps, so many were the traces of His bounty. He made the places through which He passed remarkable by the profusion of His blessings. In that little village there are no blind men or cripples; no doubt, said one, the kind-hearted Jesus has gone that way." In all this part of the sermon there is a youthfulness, a freshness of tenderness and of compassion, which is charming, and it has a flavour of his early genius.

When he portrays to us Jesus desiring to clothe Himself with a flesh similar to ours, and when he sets forth the motives for this according to the Scriptures, with what distinctness and saliency he does it! He represents that Saviour who seeks out misery and distress, as refusing to assume the angelic nature which would have exempted Him from this,—leaping upon, in some sense, and striving to pursue, to apprehend, the miserable human nature, clinging to it and running after it although it flies from Him, although it is reluctant to be assumed by Him; desiring for Himself a real flesh, real human blood, with the qualities and weaknesses of ours, and that for what reason? In order to be compassionate. Although in all this Bossuet only makes use of the terms of the apostle, and perhaps of those of Chrysostom, he employs them with a delight, a luxury, a gust for reduplication, which denote vivacious youth: "He has apprehended the divine nature, says the apostle; it flew away, it did not wish for the

Saviour; what did He do? He ran after it with headlong speed, leaping over mountains, that is to say, the angelic ranks. He ran like a giant with great and immeasurable steps, passing in a moment from heaven to earth. There He overtook that fugitive nature; He seized it, He apprehended it, body and soul." Let us study the youthful eloquence of Bossuet, even in his perils of taste, as one studies the youthful poetry of the great Corneille.

I know that one must be very circumspect when he describes the liberties of youth in Bossuet's style, for he is one of those speakers who have never lacked daring; I do not believe, however, that I am deceived when detecting the superabundance of that age in certain passages. After having, in the first part of the discourse, unfolded, and, as it were, exhausted all the tenderness and compassion of Jesus Christ made in the image of man,—after having exclaimed: "He has pitied us, that good brother, as His companions in fortune, having had to pass through the same miseries as we," Bossuet, in the second part of his discourse, portrays Him returning and, finally, becoming angry on account of the hardness of heart which He finds in man: "But as there is no stream whose course is so tranquil, that one may not cause it, by resistance, to acquire the rapidity of a torrent; so the Saviour, irritated by all those obstacles which the blind Jews opposed to His goodness, seems to lay aside in a moment all that pacific disposition." Then, by a sudden contrast, Bossuet strives and, as he says, employs all the rest of his discourse, to portray to his hearers the yet smoking ruins of Jerusalem. He delights to set forth the prophecy and the menace as it issued at first from the mouth of Moses; as it is embodied in Deuteronomy. He enumerates the circumstances of its utterance, he comments on it, follows it step by step, all the while accompanying it with his eagle cries; and when he has led the Romans and the Emperor Titus before Jerusalem, when he is very sure that it is invested, that it is surrounded with walls by the besiegers, that it is more like a prison than a city, and that not a single

person who is shut up in it like a famished wolf, can escape to seek for sustenance,—“Behold, behold, Christians,” he cries in triumph, “the prophecy of my Gospel fulfilled in every particular. Behold thyself besieged by thy enemies, as my Master foretold thee forty years before: ‘O Jerusalem, behold thou art shut in on all sides, they have compassed thee round, they have surrounded thee with ramparts and forts!’ These are the words of my text; and is there a single word which does not seem to have been put there to describe that circumvallation, not with lines, but with walls! After that period, what words could paint to you their raging hunger, their fury, and their despair?” Here, again, it seems to me, that young Bossuet indulges in a little excess; and just as in the first part he had gone so far, with regard to the God-made man, as to speak of the qualities of the blood and of the temperature of the body, he proceeds in this second part to dwell on the horrors of the famine and the foul details of the contagion. He will use terms still more frightful when he wishes to declare the final sentence, the dispersion of the Jewish nation through the world, and to expose to us its members drawn and quartered. It is true he immediately adds: “This comparison excites your horror;” yet he pushes it to the end, without any fear of the consequences. I see in this a proof that he is young still; he has some cruelty, not in the heart, but in his talent.*

The reader will have remarked how easily he appropriates that of which he speaks and upon which he relies: *my* Gospel, *my* text, *my* twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, *my* Master, *my* pontiff, etc. He loves these sovereign forms; he lays his hand upon things, and while he is speaking he cannot help performing the office of God his Master. It is not self-love or arrogance in Bossuet; it is only that his own personality is absorbed and confounded in the public personality of the Levite and the priest. He is at these moments but the man of the Most High.

* So with the Count de Maistre in that famous passage upon the executioner. This passage of Bossuet resembles and recalls it.

A passage in this discourse gives us its date: upon the occasion of the civil disorders which break out in besieged Jerusalem, and which cause these insane people, on returning from the fight against the common enemy, to come to blows with each other, Bossuet has a reflection upon his country: "But perhaps you do not observe that God has let fall the same scourges upon our own heads. France, alas! our common country, so long agitated by a foreign war, completes its distresses with intestine divisions. Again, among the Jews, both parties combined to repulse the common enemy, and were far from wishing to strengthen themselves by its assistance, or to have any understanding with it; the least suspicion of such a thing would have been punished by death without mercy. But we, on the contrary . . . ah! friends, let us not finish, let us spare our shame a little." But we, on the contrary . . . : this is an allusion to the party which favoured the Spaniards, to the Prince of Condé, who had become their ally and general. When Bossuet, at a later day, in his Funeral Oration over the prince, shall speak with so much repugnance of civil discords, and of those things concerning which he wished he could be for ever silent, he will repeat a real and lively sentiment which had already drawn from him a cry both of pain and alarm.

The language of this sermon, as of all the discourses of these years, is a little more antique than that of Bossuet when he had become the orator of Lewis XIV. ; one notes in it some phrases of an earlier age: "But still let us pretend to be Christians, if it be, nevertheless, that we spare nothing, etc. It is declared that the example of the ruin of Jerusalem, and of that divine vengeance, so public, so indubitable, must serve as a memorial for ages upon ages." Elsewhere it is rather in the employment of certain roughly concise words, and in the almost Latin turn of expression, that one perceives the contemporary of Pascal: "For, finally, do not persuade yourselves that God may let you rebel against Him for ages: His compassion is infinite, but its effects have their limits prescribed by His wisdom:

that wisdom which has counted the stars, which has bounded this universe by a definite roundness, which has prescribed bounds to the waves of the sea, has marked the height to which it has resolved to let iniquities mount." One would believe he was reading a passage in Pascal's *Thoughts*.

I have still much to say upon that first period of Bossuet, at Metz as well as at Paris. How was it with his person in his youth, when he pronounced these discourses, already so powerful, with a precocious authority which was radiant with a visible inspiration, and which was embellished, so to speak, with a certain degree of artlessness? M. de Bausset has asked and has answered this question, so far as he could, in very general terms: "Nature," says he, "endowed him with the noblest of figurés; the fire of his mind shone forth in his looks; the traits of his genius penetrated all his discourses. It is enough to look at the portrait of Bossuet, painted in his old age by the celebrated Rigaud, to form an idea of what he must have been in his youth." He cites a little farther on the testimony of the Abbé Leduc, who reports that "Bossuet's look was pleasant and piercing; that his voice appeared always to proceed from a passionate soul; that his gestures in oratorical action were modest, quiet, and natural." These delineations, a little tame and after the manner of Daguesseau, have not been satisfactory, we imagine, to M. de Lamartine, who, with that second sight which is granted to poets, knew how to see Bossuet distinctly as he was when young, Bossuet at the age of Eliacim, even before he had entered the pulpit, and when he was simply ascending the steps of the altar. The author of *Jocelyn* says:

"He (Bossuet) was not nine years old when his hair was cut in a circlet at the top of his head. At thirteen he was nominated canon of Metz. . . . That tonsure and that vesture were as becoming to his physiognomy as to his general appearance. One recognised the priest in the youth. His frame, which was greatly to increase, was tall for his age; it had the delicacy and suppleness of the man who is not

destined to bear any other burden than thought; who glides composedly, with quiet steps, amid the columns of basilicas, and whom habitual genuflection and prostration soften under the majesty of God. His hair was of a brown tint and silken; one or two locks rose in an involuntary tuft at the top of the forehead, like the diadem of Moses, or like the horns of the prophetic ram; these hairs thus standing, whose motion one notices again even in his portraits taken at an advanced age, gave *du vent* and inspiration to his hair. His eyes were black and penetrating, but mild. His look was a continual and sereno gleam; the light did not dart forth in flashes, it ran from them with a radiance which allured the eye without dazzling it. His lofty and flat forehead revealed through a fine skin the interlaced veins of the temples. His nose, almost straight, slender, delicately sculptured, between the Greek softness and the Roman energy, was neither turned up with impudence, nor depressed by the heaviness of the senses. His mouth opened wide between delicate lips; his lips quivered often without utterance, as if with the wind of an internal speech which modesty repressed before older men. A half smile, full of grace and of mute after-thought, was their most frequent expression. One saw in them a naturally sincere disposition, never rudeness or disdain. To sum up generally, in that physiognomy the charm of the character so completely hid from view the force of the understanding, and suavity so harmoniously tempered the virility of the entire expression, that one detected the genius only by the exquisite delicacy of the muscles and nerves of the thought, and the effect on the beholder was attraction rather than admiration."

Here is a primitive Bossuet very much softened and mellowed, and, it seems to me, a Bossuet who is made, very much at one's fancy, to resemble Jocelyn and Fenelon, in order that it may be said afterward: "The soul of that great man was evidently of one temper, and the genius of another. Nature had made him tender; theological dogmas had made him hard." I do not believe in this contradiction in Bossuet, the most undivided and the least contested nature that we know. But what I am not less sure of is, that the illustrious biographer treats literary history here absolutely as history is treated in a historic romance; wherever facts are wanting, or the dramatic interest demands it, the character is carelessly invented. Without refusing the praise which certain ingenious and delicate touches of this portrait merit, I will permit myself to ask more seriously: Is it proper, is it becoming, thus

to paint Bossuet as a youth, to flatter thus with the brush, as one would a Greek dancing woman, or a beautiful child of the English aristocracy, him who never ceased to grow under the shadow of the temple,—that serious young man who gave promise simply of the great man, all genius and all eloquence? What! do you not feel it?—there is here a moral contradiction. In a sermon delivered in his youth, upon the occasion of one's taking the veil, Bossuet, speaking of the modesty of the virgins, and contrasting it with the freedoms of many Christian girls in the world, said: "Who could recite all the artifices they employ to attract the looks of men? and what are those looks, and can I speak of them in this pulpit? No: it is enough to tell you that the looks which please them are not indifferent looks; they are those passionate, eager looks, which drink in deep draughts from their faces all the poison they have prepared for men's hearts; these are the looks they love." An orator, I know, is not a virgin; the first condition of the orator, even the sacred orator, is to be bold and daring: but what boldness was Bossuet's! I can say that, with his manly and virile modesty, he would have blushed, even in youth, at being viewed in that way in order to be painted. Far, far from his taste these fondlings and these physiological feats of a brush which amuses itself with carmine and with veins! Go rather and see in the Louvre his bust by Coysevox: a noble head, a fine bearing, pride without arrogance, a lofty and full forehead, the seat of thought and majesty; the mouth singularly agreeable in expression, delicate, speaking even when it is in repose; the profile straight and pre-eminently notable: in the whole a look of fire, of intelligence, and of goodness, the figure which is the worthiest of the man, just as he was formed to address his fellows, and to look at the heavens. Take away the wrinkles from that face, give it the bloom of life, throw over it the veil of youth, imagine a young and adolescent Bossuet but be sparing of your descriptions of him, for fear you may fall short of the severity of the subject and of the respect which is due to it.

II.

I DESIGN in this paper only to continue my view of Bossuet in his early career, not before he was renowned (for that was early), but before he became glorious. The reverence we have for him does not need to become superstitious, and there is no reason why we should not acknowledge the perils and the striking inequalities of a youthful manner of speech which will soon attain of itself to the plenitude of its eloquence. It is a long distance from the *Panegyric of Saint Gorgon*, which he preached at Metz during the years of his stay there, to the *Panegyric of Saint Paul*, which signalized the first years of his preaching at Paris, and is already in the style of the greatest of our sacred orators. In the *Panegyric of Saint Gorgon*, the subject was evidently at fault; little more was known of that martyr than his suffering, and the orator found himself compelled to fall back upon the frightful details of the physical torments which had to be undergone by the person whom he was to extol: "The tyrant made the holy martyr sleep upon an iron gridiron, already red with the fierce heat, which instantly contracted his bared nerves. . . . What a horrible spectacle!" And he describes the affair, not dispensing with any circumstance. We have two discourses of Bossuet upon the same subject, or, at least, one entire discourse and the outline or sketch of another which he delivered also: it was a tribute paid to a parish of the town which was under the patronage of the saint. Bossuet is not one of those ingenious men of talent who have the art of treating commonplace subjects excellently, and of introducing into them foreign materials; but let the subject which is presented to him be vast, lofty, majestic, and he is at ease, and, the higher the theme, the more is he equal to its demands. When he quitted Metz to establish himself in Paris, Bossuet showed immediately the effect of the change in his eloquence; and in reading his subsequent

productions, we feel as if we were passing from one climate to another. "In following the discourses of Bossuet in their chronological order," the Abbé Vaillant very well says, "We see the old words fall successively as the leaves of the woods fall." The superannuated or trivial expressions, the offensive images, the slips of taste, which are still less the fault of Bossuet's youth than of all that epoch of transition which preceded the great reign, disappear, and leave in use only that new, familiar, unexpected speech, which will never recoil, as he said of Saint Paul, from the glorious meannesses of Christianity, but will learn also magnificently to consecrate its combats, its spiritual government, and its triumphs. Called often, from the year 1662, to preach before the Court, having to speak in churches or before large bodies in Paris, Bossuet acquired there at once the language in use, while still preserving and developing his own; he had completely despoiled the provinces; there, during six years of exercise and discipline, he had been trained; the Court polished him only so far as it was necessary. He was a finished orator at the age of thirty-four. During eight or nine years (1660-1669), he was the great fashionable preacher, as well as the most renowned.

Two opinions resulted from the publication of the Sermons of Bossuet for the first time, in 1772; I have already indicated that of the Abbé Maury, who placed these Sermons above everything else of that kind which the French pulpit had produced; the other opinion, which was that of La Harpe, and which I have known to be shared in by other sensible men, was less enthusiastic, and showed more sensitiveness to the inequalities and discordances of tone. It would be possible to justify both of these opinions, with the understanding that the first should triumph in the end, and that the genius of Bossuet, there as elsewhere, should keep the first rank. It is true that, read continuously, without any notice of the age of the writer, and of the place and circumstances of their composition, some of these discourses of Bossuet may offend or surprise some minds, that love to dwell upon the more uniform and more exact

continuity of Bourdaloue and Massillon. For example, one opens the volumes, and he finds at the very beginning, one after the other, four sermons or plans of sermons upon All Saints' Day. The first, of which we have only a sketch, and which is little more than a mass of texts and notes, was preached at Metz; the second, which we have complete, was also preached there. This second discourse is fatiguing, slightly subtle, and has too much theological display. Wishing to give an idea of the felicity and glory of the saints in the life to come, wishing to unfold the designs of God in the discipline of His elect, and to show how He takes them, manages them, prepares them, and only succeeds at the very last in perfecting them; the orator, who seeks to give a rational explanation of this procedure, institutes a lofty dissertation rather than preaches a sermon: he must have had little influence that time on the minds of his auditory, and they could not have followed him far. Not that there are not great thoughts, beautiful and grand comparisons, and also the ever true and ever touching complaints about human life,—so agitated and so wretched in itself, that it was necessary, he says, that God should use some address and some artifice in regard to it, to conceal its miseries from us. "And yet, O blindness of the human mind! it is this life which seduces,—this life, which is only trouble and agitation, which amounts to nothing, which draws just so much nearer to its end as the moments of its duration are multiplied, and which will fail us suddenly like a false friend, when it shall seem to promise us the most repose. Of what are we thinking?" But, in spite of these and many other noteworthy traits, this second sermon for All Saints is, I repeat it, fatiguing and a little obscure; and if one would see again the great orator in Bossuet, he must pass to the third: or rather, in a well-advised reading of that part of Bossuet's works, one should omit, suppress both the first sermon and the fourth, which are only incomplete sketches,—not stop at the second, which is difficult,—and then one will freshly enjoy all the moral and serene beauty of that third sermon, preached in

1669 in the royal chapel, and in which Bossuet, refuting Montaigne, finishing and consummating Plato, demonstrates and almost renders evident to the least prepared minds, the conditions of the only true, durable, and eternal happiness. And here observe that he does not do as in the discourse at Metz, where he thought much more of dividing, of investigating his subject, than of lighting it up; he reasons no longer for himself alone, he thinks of his auditors, he does not lose sight of them for an instant: "O breadth, O depth, O boundless length and inaccessible height (of the celestial happiness)! will it be possible for me to comprehend you in a single discourse? Let us go together, my brethren, let us enter that abyss of glory and of majesty. Let us cast ourselves with confidence upon that ocean. . . ." When he would make us comprehend that true happiness for an intelligent being lies in the perception and possession of truth, he sees clearly that he will be asked: "What is truth?" and he is going to try to answer it: "Gross and carnal mortals, we understand everything corporeally; we wish always for material images and forms. Shall I not be able to-day to open those internal and spiritual eyes, which are concealed in the depths of your soul, to turn them aside a moment from the vague and changing images which the senses present, and accustom them to bear the sight of pure truth? Let us try, let us endeavour, let us see. . . ." The second point is altogether moral in character, and very beautiful. In order to give a vivid idea of the genuine pleasures which the blessed enjoy, the orator says to himself as well as to his hearers: "Let us philosophize a little, before all things else, upon the nature of the world's joys." He then tries to make us realize, by what is lacking to our joys, what must enter into those of a better state: "For it is an error to believe that we must welcome joy equally from whatever quarter it originates in, whatever hand offers it to us. Of all the passions, the fullest of illusion is joy." Let us ask ourselves always: "Whence comes it, and what is the occasion of it? Where does it lead us, and in what state does it leave us? If it passes away so quickly, it is

not the true. The happiness of a being (a great principle, according to Bossuet) must never be distinguished from the perfection of that being; true happiness, worthy of the name, is the state in which the being is living most in accordance with its nature, in which it is most truly itself, in the plenitude and in the satisfaction of its inner desires. Montaigne (he names him in the pulpit) in vain holds faith in check, degrades human nature, and compares it to that of the brutes, by giving it often the lower place: "But tell me, subtle philosopher, you who laugh so archly at the man who imagines that he is something, will you count it for nothing to know God? To know a primal nature, to adore His eternity, to admire His omnipotence, to praise His wisdom, to commit one's self to His providence,—is that nothing which distinguishes us from the brutes?" He presses him; he pushes him; the witty sceptic has never seen the flash of a sword so near his eyes: "Well, then! let the elements demand back from us all that they have lent us, provided that God may also demand back of us that soul which He made in His own likeness. Perish all the thoughts which we have given to mortal things; but let that which was born of God be immortal like Himself. Therefore, sensual man, you who renounce the future life because you fear its just punishments, do not longer hope for nothingness; no, no, hope for it no longer; wish for it, or not wish for it, your eternity is assured to you."

As for the happiness itself, of which he would give us a just idea, the purely spiritual and internal happiness of the soul in the other life, he sums it up in an expression which concludes a happy development of the subject, and he defines it: "Reason always attentive and always contented." Take reason in its liveliest and most luminous sense, the pure flame disengaged from the senses.

By these examples, which I might multiply, we see clearly the march and the rapid progress of the genius of Bossuet. Like all inventors, he has had at first some perils to overcome, has had to grope about, and he has done it impetuously. I recollect that formerly M. Ampire, in his

lectures at the College of France, wishing to characterize those three great epochs of Pulpit Eloquence among us, the time of its creation and puissant establishment by Bossuet, the time of its full growth under Bourdaloue, and finally the epoch of its extreme expansion and autumnal fertility under Massillon, connected with it the ancient names, now become symbols, which consecrate the three great periods of the tragic stage in Greece. Of these names there are two at least which may be recalled here without incongruity; there is something of the greatness and of the majesty of Æschylus, as well as of Corneille, in Bossuet, just as there may be visible something of Euripides, as well as of Racine, in Massillon.

Bossuet's is a talent anterior in origin and formation to that of Lewis XIV., but on the score of its completion and perfection it owed much to that young king. Attempts have been made more than once to rob Lewis XIV. of his peculiar useful influence and propitious ascendancy over what one has called his age: for some time, however, that unjust and illiberal contest seemed to have been given up, when a great writer of our days, M. Cousin, suddenly renewed it, and desired once more to despoil Lewis XIV. of his highest glory, in order to carry it back altogether to the preceding epoch. M. Cousin has a very convenient way of exaggerating and aggrandizing the objects of his admiration: he degrades or depresses their surroundings. It is thus that, to exalt Corneille, in whom he sees Æschylus, Sophocles, all the Greek tragic poets united, he sacrifices and diminishes Racine; it is thus that, in order to celebrate better the epoch of Lewis XIII. and the Regency which followed, he depresses the reign of Lewis XIV.; that, in order to glorify the Poussins and the Sueurs of whom he speaks, perhaps, with more enthusiasm and applause than direct knowledge and real felt gust, he blasphemes and denies the merit of the admirable Flemish painting; he says of Raphael that he does not touch the feelings, that he only plays around the heart, *Circum præcordia ludit*. In a word, M. Cousin is voluntarily a man of foregone conclu-

sions, of preconceived ideas, or, rather still, he is the man of his temperament and of his own nature. He clings resolutely to what he prefers as his starting-point : his personal tastes carry his judgment completely captive. He is wedded, on all occasions, to his own peculiar opinions, and never adopts just ones till he has been opposed on all sides with contradictions and checks, and obliged to limit and moderate his assertions. Regarding the present question, he has gone so far as to maintain that this Lewis XIV., who troubles him, was not entirely himself, and somehow did not begin to rule and to reign till after the influence of M. de Lyonne and of Colbert, two pupils of Richelieu and of Mazarin, had been exhausted ; so you have the great reign thrown back ten or fifteen years, and the minority of the monarch strangely prolonged by an unexpected exercise of authority.* M. Poujoulat, taking these assertions very seriously, and without ever permitting himself to smile at them, has combated them successfully. Bossuet, it seems to me, presents us with one of the greatest and most striking examples of the kind of blessings which the age of Lewis XIV. owed to the young star of its king from the very first day. Honoured by the queen, Anne of Austria, becoming latterly her favourite preacher, Bossuet had at the outset some of those abounding and ingenious subtleties which characterized the taste of the time. Thus, preaching before the queen-mother in 1658 or 1659, the *Panegyric on Saint Theresa*, influenced, perhaps, by the Spanish saint's refine-

* It is in the preface to the volume entitled *Madame de Longueville* that M. Cousin has said : "The influence of Lewis XIV. made itself felt very late. He did not take the reins of government till 1661, and at first he followed his time, he did not rule; he did not appear to be really himself till he was no longer led by Lyonne and Colbert, the last disciples of Richelieu and of Mazarin. It was then that, governing almost alone, and superior to his surroundings, he everywhere impressed his taste," etc. etc. The idea of making M. de Lyonne reign and govern in place of Lewis XIV. is one of the strangest of all. What! because M. de Mignet, in publishing the *Negotiations relative to the Spanish Succession*, has shown by a series of dispatches that M. de Lyonne was a very clever Secretary of State and Foreign Minister, you, for this reason, make him out to be a man who delays the real

ments of style, and developing at pleasure a passage of Tertullian which declares that Jesus, before dying, wished to satiate Himself with the luxury of patience, Bossuet will not fear to add: "Would you not say, Christians, that, according to the sentiment of that Father, the whole life of the Saviour was a festival of which all the meats were torments? a strange festival in the opinion of the age, but one which Jesus deemed worthy of His taste! His death sufficed for our safety; but His death did not suffice for that marvellous appetite which He had for suffering for us." Here is much of the *bel esprit* which still clings to the style of speech fashionable under the Regency. But when he was called to speak before the young king, he speedily learned to correct such fancies and to repress them. Lewis XIV., when he heard Bossuet for the first time, greatly relished his preaching, and did a charming thing for him, quite worthy of a young prince whose mother was still living: he had a letter written to Bossuet's father at Metz, congratulating him upon having such a son. He who does not appreciate this delicate act is no better fitted to appreciate the kind of influence which that young prince could have on the vast imagination and reasonable mind of Bossuet. The language of Lewis XIV. was always accurate, just as the same quality, according to another, characterized his talent for rapid observation. There was in him or about him something which warned men not to exaggerate, not to force things. Bossuet, when speaking in his presence, felt that, with respect to a certain refined taste, he was

accession of Lewis XIV., and who, in your mind, provisionally de-thrones him! Never has one more grossly abused the privilege of extracting information from State-papers than in making them aid such a conclusion. But the sight of all posthumous and unedited papers causes M. Cousin a kind of dazzlement. Lewis XIV., in his *Memoirs*, speaking of M. de Lyonne at the time of his death, contents himself with saying: "In 1671 a minister died who held the office of Secretary of State, having the department of Foreign Affairs. He was a man of capacity, but not without faults; nevertheless he performed that duty well, which was a very important one. I spent some time in thinking whom I should appoint to that place." It is thus that the king expresses himself.

confronted by a standard. I desire to say nothing that is not incontestable: Lewis XIV., when very young, did Bossuet a service by giving him proportion and all his precision. For his inspiration and his originality the great orator continued to be indebted only to himself and the spirit which replenished him.

There is a fact which may be verified: in this series of Bossuet's Sermons, which have been arranged, not in the chronological order in which he composed them, but in the order of the Christian year, beginning with All Saints' Day and ending with Pentecost, if you would put your finger unmistakably upon one of the finest and most faultless, take any one you please of those of which you read, *Preached before the King*.

I cannot help expressing another thought. Oh! when M. Cousin speaks so freely of Lewis XIV., of Lewis XIII., and of Richelieu, giving the palm so confidently to that which he prefers and which he thinks resembles him, I am astonished that he has never once asked himself this question: "What would my own talent have gained or lost, that talent which is daily compared with that of the writers of the great age,—what would have been gained or lost by that admirable talent" (I forget that it is he that is speaking), "if I had had to write or to discourse, were it only for some years, in the very presence of Lewis XIV., that is to say, that calm, sober, and august royal good sense? And would not what I should have thus gained or lost, in inspiration or eloquence, have been precisely that which was excessive in it, and also that which it lacked in gravity, in proportion, in propriety, in perfect accuracy, and, consequently, in true authority?" For there was in Lewis XIV., and in the atmosphere about him, something which enforced the cultivation of these qualities and virtues by all who came within the sphere of the great reign, and in this sense he may be said to have conferred them upon them.

There is no doubt that, if Bossuet had continued in the sermonizing career which he followed from 1661 to 1669, he would not have kept the sceptre, and that Bourdaloue

would have come, in the general estimation, only after and a little below him. And yet, perhaps, that solid, forcible, and continuous evenness of style, with less audacity and splendour, was better adapted to the average mass of hearers. I merely mention this idea which I believe to be true, and which does not altogether agree with that which a sovereignly inexact biographer has expressed: "These two rivals in eloquence," says M. de Lamartine, speaking of Bossuet and Bourdaloue, "were passionately compared. To the shame of the time, the number of Bourdaloue's admirers surpassed in a short time that of the enthusiastic admirers of Bossuet. The reason of this preference of a cold argumentation to a sublime eloquence lies in the nature of human things. The men of middling stature have more resemblance to their age than the Titanic men have to their contemporaries. The orators who deal in argument are more easily comprehended by the multitude than the orators who are fired with enthusiasm; one must have wings to follow the lyric orator. . . ." This theory, invented expressly to give the greatest glory to the lyric orators and the Titanic men, is here at fault. M. de Bausset has remarked, on the contrary, as a kind of singularity, that it never entered any man's head at that time to consider Bossuet and Bourdaloue as subjects for a comparison, and to weigh in the balance their respective merits and genius, as was so often done in the case of Corneille and Racine; or, at least, if they were compared, it was very seldom. To the honour, and not to the shame of the time, the public taste and sentiment took notice of the difference. Bossuet, in his higher sphere as bishop, remained the oracle, the Doctor, a modern Father of the Church, the great orator, who appeared on funereal and majestic occasions; who sometimes reappeared in the pulpit at the monarch's request, or to solemnize the Assemblies of the Clergy, leaving on each occasion an overpowering and ineffaceable recollection of his eloquence. Meanwhile Bourdaloue continued to be for the age the usual preacher *par excellence*, the one who gave a continual

Course of Lectures on moral and practical Christianity, and who distributed the daily bread in its most wholesome form to all the faithful. Bossuet has said somewhere, in one of his sermons: "Were it not better suited to the dignity of this pulpit to regard the maxims of the Gospel as indubitable, than to prove them by reasoning, how easily might I make you see," etc. There, where Bossuet would have suffered by stooping and subjecting himself to too long a course of proof and to a continuous argumentation, Bourdaloue, who had not the same impatient genius, was an apostolic workman who was more efficient in the long run, and better adapted to his work by his constancy. The age in which both appeared had the wisdom to make this distinction, and to appreciate each of them without opposing one to the other; and to-day those who glory in this opposition, and who so easily crush Bourdaloue with Bossuet, the man of talent with the man of genius, because they think they are conscious themselves of belonging to the family of geniuses, too easily forget that this Christian eloquence was designed to edify and to nourish still more than to please or to subdue.

Here it is just to say that in these Sermons or discourses preached by Bossuet from 1661-1669 and later,—in almost all of them, there are admirable passages, which move us readers of to-day, to whatever class we may belong, very differently from the sermons of Bourdaloue. In the *Panegyric on Saint Paul*, at the very beginning, what a probing of the subject to the core, in its inmost, deepest, most supernatural part! Paul is the stronger the weaker he feels himself to be; it is his weakness which makes his strength. It is the artless Apostle, endowed with a hidden wisdom, with an incomprehensible wisdom, that shocks and scandalizes, and he will give him no disguise or artifice:

"He will go to that polished Greece, the mother of philosophers, and orators, and, in spite of the resistance of the people, he will establish there more churches than Plato gained disciples by that eloquence which was thought divine. He will preach Jesus in Athens, and the most learned of its senators will pass from the

Areopagus into the school of that barbarian. He will push his conquests still farther; he will humble at the feet of the Saviour the majesty of the Roman fasces in the person of a proconsul, and he will make the judges before whom he is cited tremble on their tribunals. Rome even shall hear his voice, and one day that mistress city shall feel herself much more honoured by a letter written with the stylus of Paul, than by so many famous harangues which she has heard from her Cicero.

“What is the reason of this, Christians? It is that Paul has means of persuasion which Greece does not teach, and which Rome has not learned! A supernatural power, which is pleased to exalt that which the haughty despise, has permeated and mingled with the august simplicity of his words. Hence it happens that we admire in his admirable Epistles a certain more than human virtue which persuades in opposition to rules, or rather which does not so much persuade as it captivates men’s understandings; which does not tinkle the ears, but which directs its blows right at the heart. Just as we see a great river, after running into a plain, retain still the violent and impetuous force which it acquired in the mountains where it had its origin, so the celestial virtue which is contained in the writings of Saint Paul, preserves even in that simplicity of style all the vigour which it brings from the Heaven whence it descends.”

There is nothing to be said after such beauties.

Let us take now quite a different kind of sermon, preached afterward at the Court, that upon *Ambition* (1666), that upon *Honour* (1666), and that upon the *Love of Pleasure* (1662); beauties of the same kind appear everywhere. Upon ambition and honour, he says in the face of Lewis XIV. everything which could prevent the idolatry of which he is soon to be the object, if it were possible to prevent it. He seeks by the example of a Nero or a Nebuchadnezzar, for “something which may awaken in the human heart that terrible thought of seeing nothing above it. It is there that covetousness,” he says, “goes daily subtleizing, and turning back, so to speak, upon itself. Thence come unknown vices. . . .” And of that man, little in himself, and ashamed of his littleness, who labours to increase, to multiply himself, who imagines that he embodies all that he amasses and acquires, he says: “So many times a count, so many times a lord, possessor of so much riches, master of so many persons, member of so many councils, and so of the rest: however, let him

multiply himself as many times as he pleases, it needs but a single death to humble him. Amid this infinite increase which our vanity imagines, we never think of measuring ourselves by our coffins, which, nevertheless, are the only exact measure." It is the peculiarity of Bossuet thus to have at the first glance all the great ideas which are the fixed limits and the necessary bounds of things, and which take no note of the shifting intervals where the eternal infancy of man sports and forgets itself.

That it may not be said that I seek in Bossuet only for lessons for the great and the powerful, I will add that in this same sermon upon *Honour*, in which he enumerates and considers the different kinds of vanities, he does not forget the men of letters, the poets, men who in their way contend for renown and empire: "These, who pride themselves on their intellectual gifts, the learned, the men of letters, the wits, think they are more rational than those I have named. In truth, Christians, they are worthy of being distinguished from the rest, and they form one of the world's finest ornaments. But who can endure them when, as soon as they are conscious of a little talent, they weary all ears with their facts and their sayings, and because they know how to arrange words, to measure a verse, or to round a period, think they have a right to be heard for ever, and to decide everything authoritatively? O rectitude of life, O purity of morals, O moderation of the passions, rich and true ornaments of the rational nature, when shall we learn to prize you? . . ." Eternal Poetry, the source, support, and superior rule of true talents, behold yourself recognised incidentally in a sermon of Bossuet at the very moment when Despréaux was trying to recognise you in his way, in his Satires. But from how much higher a region does the spring run, and in how much more stable a region does it originate, in Bossuet than in the Horaces and the Despréaux!

As a literary peculiarity, it is to be noted that in these Sermons of Bossuet there are some very fine passages which one finds repeated even two or three times in different

discourses. From these passages I shall cite a complete moral dissertation upon the inconstancy of human affairs, and the freaks of fortune, which sports on every occasion with all the wisest and most prudent precautions: "Use the utmost possible precaution, never will you keep pace with its caprices; when you think you are fortified on one side, disgrace will come upon another; make all the other parts secure, and the edifice will fail at the foundations; if the foundation is solid, a thunderbolt will come from the sky, and overturn the whole structure from top to bottom." This eloquent commonplace reappears in the third sermon on *All Saints' Day*, which I have noticed in the sermon on the *Love of Pleasure*, and, with some variation, in that on *Ambition*: "O man, do not deceive thyself, the future teems with events too strange, and loss and ruin affect the fortunes of men in too many ways, to allow of their being completely prevented. You dam up the water on one side, it works through on the other, it bubbles up even from underground. . . ." After all, Bossuet is an orator: however little he cultivates his art, he possesses it, and, like a Demosthenes, knows all about its practice; this fine passage, which looks so abrupt and sudden, he well knows to be fine; he keeps it in reserve, to be repeated on occasion. We observe also, even in his sermons delivered at the great epoch, some expressions, not obsolete, but peculiarly energetic, which are not in current use: "Our delightful age which cannot endure the hardship of the Cross;" for our age which is fond of delights. "That is to wish in some sense, to desert the Court, in order to combat ambition." *Deserter*, that is to say, *devaster, rendre déserte*. "There is this difference between the reason and the senses, that the senses make their impression first; their operation is prompt, their attack blunt and surprising." *Surprenante* is used here in a proper and physical sense, and not in the figurative sense of astonishing or exciting wonder. But pardon me for dwelling on these academic details in the presence of Bossuet.

In the first years of his residence at Paris, he pronounced

the first of his peculiar Funeral Orations. We have those which he delivered on the death of Father Bourgoing, the head of the Oratory (1662), and on the death of Nicholas Cornet, grand-master of Navarre, and the cherished master of Bossuet in particular (1663). There are beauties in these two discourses; a fine passage upon the establishment of the Oratory, is often quoted from the Funeral Oration on Father Bourgoing. In the Funeral Oration upon M. Nicholas Cornet, the questions of grace and free-will, which then agitated the Church under the names of Jansenism and Molinism, are admirably defined, and Bossuet, by the free way in which he handles them, shows how far he is disconnected from parties, and how far he soars above them. The Gallican arbiter, in these perilous matters, is found. However, that which strikes us in these two Funeral Orations, especially in the last, is a remarkable lack of harmony between the style and the subject. We who do not belong to the house of Navarre, cannot be so enthusiastic about that glory of Nicholas Cornet, or sympathize with the apostrophe to his great manes. Bossuet requires large and lofty themes; meanwhile till they come to him, he magnifies and heightens those which he handles; but some disproportion appears. He was thundering a little in the void at those moments, or rather in too narrow a place; his voice was too strong for its organ.

He was to be more at ease, and to feel more at liberty, in celebrating the queen, Anne of Austria, whose Funeral Oration he pronounced some years after; but, singular thing! that discourse in which Bossuet must have poured out the gratitude of his heart, and already displayed his historical riches, has never been printed.

Finally, the death of the queen of England came to offer him (1669) the grandest and most majestic of themes. He needed the fall and the restoration of thrones, the revolution of empires, all the varied fortunes assembled in a single life, and weighing upon the same head; the eagle needed the vast depth of the heavens, and, below, all the abysses

and storms of the ocean. But let us note also a service which Lewis XIV. and his reign rendered to Bossuet: he would have had these great themes equally amid the disastrous epochs and through the Frondes and civil discords, but they would have come to him scattered, in some way, and without bounds: Lewis XIV. and his reign gave him a frame in which these vast subjects were limited and fixed without being contracted. In the august yet well-defined epoch in which he spoke, Bossuet, without losing any of his breadth or any of the audacities of his talent of far-seeing observation, found everywhere about him that support that security, and that encouragement or warning, of which talent and even genius have need. Bossuet, no doubt, put his trust, before all things else, in Heaven; but, as an orator, he redoubled his authority, his calm strength, by feeling that under him, and at the moment when he pressed it with his foot, the earth of France did not tremble.

I am stopping only at the threshold of Bossuet: other publications, I hope, will furnish me with new opportunities, and will provoke me to follow him in some of his other works. I could have spoken with more detail of M. Poujoulat's book; the author would have desired it, and certainly he merited as much for his useful and conscientious labour. But he will pardon me for not entering with him into discussions which would be secondary: I commend the general spirit of his book, and I approve of its general execution, too warmly to be willing to enter upon a formal criticism of particular parts of it.

On this occasion, then, in the presence of so great a subject, and at the foot of the statue, let it suffice me to have made with a timid chisel what I call a first blow.

ROUSSEAU.

AFTER having spoken of the pure, airy, unemphatic, entirely fluid and free language which the closing seventeenth century had left to some extent as a legacy to the eighteenth, I would like to-day to speak of that language of the eighteenth century, as exemplified in the writer who did the most to improve it, who made it undergo, at least, the greatest revolution since Pascal, a revolution from which we of the nineteenth century begin to reckon. Before Rousseau and since Pascal there had been many trials of ways of writing, which were quite different from those of the eighteenth century: Fontenelle had his manner, if there had ever been a manner; Montesquieu had his, stronger, firmer, more striking, but a manner still. Voltaire alone had none, and his vivid, clear, rapid language ran, so to speak, almost from the spring. "You find," says he, somewhere, "that I express myself very clearly: I am like the little rivulets; they are transparent because they are not very deep."

He said that laughing; one tells himself thus many half truths. The age, however, demanded more; it wished to be moved, warmed, rejuvenated by the expression of ideas and sentiments which it had not well defined, but which it was still seeking for. The prose of Buffon, in the first volumes of the *Natural History*, offered it a kind of image of what it desired, an image more majestic than lively, a little beyond its reach, and too much fettered to scientific themes. Rousseau appeared: the day when he became fully known to himself, he revealed at the same time to his age the writer who was best fitted to express



J. ROUSSEAU.

with novelty, with vigour, with logic mingled with flame, the confused ideas which were fermenting and which desired expression.

In laying hold of the language which it was necessary for him to conquer and command, he gave it a bent which it was henceforth to keep; but he gave back to it more than he took away, and, in many respects, he reinvigorated and regenerated it. Since Rousseau, it is in the mould of language established and created by him that our greatest writers have cast their own innovations, and tried to excel. The pure form of the seventeenth century, such as we love to recall it, has been little more than a graceful antiquity and a regret to people of taste.

Although the *Confessions* did not appear till after the death of Rousseau, and when his influence was fully dominant, it is in that work that it is most convenient for us to study him to-day with all the merits, the fascinations, and the faults of his talents. We shall try to do so, confining ourselves as far as possible to a consideration of the writer, but without interdicting ourselves from remarks upon the ideas and character of the man. The present moment is not very favourable to Rousseau, who is accused of having been the author and promoter of many of the ills from which we suffer. "There is no writer," it has been judiciously said, "better fitted to make the poor man proud." In spite of all, in considering him here, we shall try not to harbour too much of that almost personal feeling which leads some good spirits to have a grudge against him, in the painful trials we are passing through. Men who have such a range of influence and such a future must not be judged by the feelings and reactions of a day.

The idea of writing the *Confessions* seems so natural to Rousseau, and so suitable to his disposition as well as to his genius, that one would not believe that it had been necessary to suggest it to him. It came to him, however, in the first place, from his publisher, Roy, of Amsterdam, and also from Duclos. After the *Nouvelle Heloise*, after

the *Émile*, Rousseau, fifty-two years old, began to write his *Confessions* in 1764, after his departure from Montmorency, during his stay at Motiers in Switzerland. In the last number of the Swiss Review (October, 1850), there has just been published a beginning of the *Confessions*, taken from a manuscript deposited in the Library of Neuchâtel,—a beginning which is Rousseau's first rough draft, and which he afterwards suppressed. In this first beginning, much less emphatic and less pompous than we read at the opening of the *Confessions*, we hear no peal of the trumpet of the Judgment, nor does it finish with the famous apostrophe to the Eternal Being. Rousseau sets forth there more at length, but philosophically, his plan of portraying himself, of giving his confessions with rigorous truthfulness; he shows clearly wherein the originality and singularity of his design consist:—

“No one can write a man's life but himself. The character of his inner being, his real life, is known only to himself; but in writing it, he disguises it; under the name of his life, he makes an apology; he shows himself as he wishes to be seen, but not at all as he is. The sincerest persons are truthful at most in what they say, but they lie by their réticences, and that of which they say nothing so changes that which they pretend to confess, that in uttering only a part of the truth they say nothing. I put Montaigne at the head of these falsely-sincere persons who wish to deceive in telling the truth. He shows himself with his faults, but he gives himself none but amiable ones; there is no man who has not odious ones. Montaigne paints his likeness, but it is a profile. Who knows whether some scar on the cheek, or an eye put out, on the side which he conceals from us, would not have totally changed the physiognomy?”

He wishes, then, to do what no one has planned or dared before him. As to style, it seems to him that he must invent one as novel as his plan, and commensurate with the diversity and disparity of the things which he proposes to describe:—

“If I wish to produce a work written with care, like the others, I shall not paint, I shall rouge myself. It is with my portrait that I am here concerned, and not with a book. I am going to work, so to speak, in the dark room; there is no other art necessary than to follow exactly the traits which I see marked. I form my resolution then

about the style as about the things. I shall not try at all to render it uniform; I shall write always that which comes to me, I shall change it, without scruple, according to my humour; I shall speak of everything as I feel it, as I see it, without care, without constraint, without being embarrassed by the medley. In yielding myself at once to the memory of the impression received and to the present sentiment, I shall doubly paint the state of my soul, namely, at the moment when the event happened to me and the moment when I describe it; my style, unequal and natural, sometimes rapid and sometimes diffuse, sometimes wise and sometimes foolish, sometimes grave and sometimes gay, will itself make a part of my history. Finally, whatever may be the way in which this book may be written, it will be always, by its object, a book precious for philosophers; it is, I repeat, an illustrative piece for the study of the human heart, and it is the only one that exists."

Rousseau's error was not in believing that in thus confessing himself aloud before everybody, and with a sentiment so different from Christian humility, he did a singular thing; his error was in believing that he did a useful thing. He did not see that he did like the doctor who should set himself to describe, in an intelligible, seductive manner, for the use of worldly people and the ignorant, some infirmity, some well-characterized mental malady: that doctor would be partially guilty of, and responsible for, all the maniacs and fools whom, through imitation and contagion, his book should make. The first pages of the *Confessions* are too strongly accented and very painful. I find in them, at the very beginning, "a void occasioned by a fault of memory;" Rousseau speaks there of the authors of his days; he brings at birth the germ of an inconvenience which the years have increased, he says, and "which now sometimes gives him some respites only to," etc. etc. All this is disagreeable, and savours little of that flower of expression which we enjoyed the other day under the name of urbanity. And yet, close by these roughnesses of expression, and these crudities of the soil, we meet, strange to say, with a novel, familiar, and impressive simplicity!

"I felt before thinking; it is the common lot of humanity. I experienced it more than others. I know not what I did till I was

five or six years old. I know not how I learned to read ; I recollect only my first readings, and their effect upon me. My mother had left some romances ; my father and I set to reading them after supper. The object, at first, was only to instruct me in reading, by means of amusing books, but soon the interest became so lively, that we read by turns without relaxation, and spent the night in that occupation. We could never leave off till at the end of the volume. Sometimes my father, hearing the swallows in the morning, said, quite ashamed : ' Let us go to bed, I am more of a child than you.' "

Note well that swallow ; it is the first, and it announces the new spring-time of the language ; one does not see it begin to appear till in Rousseau. It is from him that the sentiment of nature is reckoned among us, in the eighteenth century. It is from him also that is dated, in our literature, the sentiment of domestic life ; of that homely, poor, quiet, hidden life, in which are accumulated so many treasures of virtue and affection. Amid certain details, in bad taste, in which he speaks of robbery and of eatables, how one pardons him on account of that old song of childhood, of which he knows only the air and some words stitched together, but which he always wished to recover, and which he never recalls, old as he is, without a soothing charm !

" It is a caprice which I wholly fail to comprehend, but it is utterly impossible for me to sing it to the end, without being checked by my tears. I have a hundred times planned to write to Paris, to have the rest of the words sought for, if any one there knows them still : but I am almost sure that the pleasure which I take in recalling that air would vanish in part, if I had proof that other persons than my poor Aunt Susy have sung it."

This is the novelty in the author of the *Confessions*, this is what ravishes us by opening to us an unexpected source of deep and domestic sensibility. We read together the other day Madame de Caylus and her *Recollections* ; but of what memories of childhood does she speak to us ? whom did she love ? for what did she weep in quitting the home in which she was born, in which she was reared ? Has she the least thought in the world of telling us of it ? These aristocratic and refined races, gifted with so exquisite a

tact and so lively a sensibility to raillery, either do not love these simple things, or dare not let it be seen that they do. Their wit we know well enough, and we enjoy it; but where is their heart? One must be plebeian, and provincial, and a new man like Rousseau, to show himself so subject to affections of the heart and so sensitive to natural influences.

Again, when we remark with some regret that Rousseau forced, racked, and, so to speak, ploughed the language, we add immediately that he at the same time sowed and fertilized it.

A man of a proud, aristocratic family, but a pupil of Rousseau, and who had hardly more than he the sentiment and fear of the ridiculous, M. de Chateaubriand, has repeated in *René* and in his *Memoirs* that more or less direct manner of avowals and confessions, and he has drawn from it some magical and surprising effects. Let us note, however, the differences. Rousseau has not the original elevation; he is not entirely—far from it!—what one calls a well-born child; he has an inclination to vice, and to low vices; he has secret and shameful lusts which do not indicate the gentleman; he has that extreme shyness which so suddenly turns into the effrontery of the rogue and the vagabond, as he calls himself; in a word, he has not that safeguard of honour which M. de Chateaubriand had from childhood, standing like a watchful sentinel by the side of his faults. But Rousseau, with all these disadvantages, which we do not fear, after him, to mention by their name, is a better man than Chateaubriand, inasmuch as he is more human, more a man, more tender. He has not, for example, that incredible hardness of heart (a hardness really quite feudal), and that thoughtlessness in speaking of his father and his mother. When he speaks of the wrongs done him by his father, who, an honest man, but a man of pleasure, thoughtless, and remarried, abandoned him and left him to his fate, with what delicacy does he mention that painful matter! With what deep feeling is all that depicted! It is not of chivalric delicacy that I

speak ; it is of the real, the heartfelt, that which is moral and human.

It is incredible that this inner moral sentiment with which he was endowed, and which kept him so much in sympathy with other men, should not have apprised Rousseau how far he derogated from it in many a passage of his life and in many a phrase which he affects. His style, like his life, contracted some of the vices of his early education and of the bad company which he kept at first. After a childhood, virtuously passed in the circle of the domestic hearth, he became an apprentice, and as such underwent hardships which spoiled his tone and deprived him of delicacy. The words, *rogue*, *vagabond*, *ragamuffin*, *knave*, have nothing that gives him any embarrassment, and it even seems as if they returned with a certain complacency to his pen. His language preserves always something of the bad tone of his early years. I distinguish in his language two kinds of debasement : the objection to one of them is merely that it is provincial, and bespeaks a Frenchman born out of France. Rousseau will write without scowling : "*Comme que je fasse, comme que ce fût,*" etc., instead of saying, "*De quelque manière que je fasse, de quelque manière que ce fût,*" etc. ; he articulates strongly and roughly ; he has at times a little *gottre* in his voice. But that is a fault which one pardons him, so far has he succeeded in triumphing over it in some happy pages ; so far, by force of labour and emotion, has he softened his organ of speech, and learned how to give to that cultivated and laborious style mellowness and the appearance of a first gush. The other kind of debasement and corruption which one may note in him is graver, inasmuch as it touches the moral sense ; he does not seem to suspect that there are certain things, the mention of which is forbidden, that there are certain ignoble, disgusting, cynical expressions which a virtuous man never uses, and which he ignores. Rousseau, at some time, was a lackey ; we perceive it, in more than one place, in his style. He hates neither the word nor the thing. "If Fenelon were living, you

would be a Catholic," said Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to him one day, on seeing him affected by some ceremony of the Catholic worship. "Oh! if Fenelon were living," cried Rousseau, all in tears, "I should seek to be his lackey, that I might deserve to be his *valet de chambre*." We see the lack of taste even in the emotion. Rousseau is not only a workman in respect to language, an apprentice before becoming a master, who lets us see in passages marks of the solderings; he is morally a man who, when young, had the most motley experiences, and whom ugly and villainous things do not make heartsick when he names them. I shall say no more of this essential vice, this stain which it is so painful to have to notice and to censure in so great a writer and so great a painter, in such a man.

Slow to think, prompt to feel, with ardent and suppressed desires, with suffering and constraint each day, Rousseau reaches the age of sixteen, and he paints himself to us in these terms:—

"I reached thus my sixteenth year, restless, dissatisfied with everything and with myself, without a liking for my condition, without the pleasures of my age, devoured by desires of whose object I was ignorant, shedding tears without occasion, sighing without knowing why; finally, cherishing tenderly my chimeras from inability to see anything about me which was of equal value. On Sundays my playmates came for me, after the church service, to go and play with them if I could; but, once engaged in their sports, I was more ardent, and I went farther than the rest, being difficult to stir and to restrain."

Always in extremes! We here recognise the first form of the thoughts, and almost the phrases of René, those words which are already a music, and which sing still in our ears:—

"My disposition was impetuous, my character unequal. By turns noisy and joyous, silent and sad, I gathered my young companions about me, then, suddenly abandoning them, I went and seated myself apart to contemplate the fugitive cloud, or to hear the rain fall on the foliage."

Again:—

"When young I cultivated the Muses; there is nothing more poetic than a heart of sixteen years in the freshness of its passions. The

morning of life is like the morning of the day, full of purity, of hopes, and of harmonies."

René, indeed, is no other than this young man of sixteen transposed, exiled amid different natural scenery, and in the midst of a different social condition; no longer an engraver's apprentice, son of a citizen of Geneva, of a citizen of the lower class, but a cavalier, a noble traveller at large, smitten with the Muses; all, at the first view, wears a more seductive, a more poetic colour; the unexpected character of the landscape and of the framework heightens the character, and denotes a new manner; but the first evident type is where we have indicated it, and it is Rousseau who, in looking into himself, has found it. René is a more pleasing model for us, because in it all the vile aspects of humanity are concealed from us; it has a tint of Greece, of chivalry, of Christianity, the reflections of which cross each other on its surface. Words, in that masterpiece of art, have acquired a new magic; they are words full of light and harmony. The horizon is enlarged in all directions, and the rays of Olympus play upon it. Rousseau has nothing comparable with this at the first view, but he is truer at heart, more real, more living. That workman's son who goes to play with his comrades after the preaching, or to muse alone if he can, that little youth with the well-shaped form, with the keen eye, with the fine physiognomy, and who arraigns all things more than one would like,—he has more reality than the other, and more life; he is benevolent, tender, and compassionate. In the two natures, that of René and that of Rousseau, there is a spot that is diseased; they have too much ardour mingled with a tendency to inaction and idleness—a predominance of imagination and of sensibility which turn back and prey upon themselves; but, of the two, Rousseau is the more truly sensitive, as he is the most original and the most sincere in his chimerical flights, in his regrets, and in his pictures of a possible but lost ideal felicity. When, at the end of the first book of the *Confessions*, quitting his country, he pictures to himself in a simple and

touching manner the happiness which he could have enjoyed there in obscurity ; when he tells us : " I should have passed in the bosom of my religion, of my country, of my family, and of my friends, a sweet and peaceful life, such as my disposition required, in regular labour suited to my taste, and in a society after my heart ; I should have been a good Christian, a good citizen, a good father of a family, a good friend, a good workman, a good man in every respect ; I should have loved my situation ; I should have honoured it, perhaps, and, after having passed an obscure and simple, but even and pleasant life, I should have died peacefully in the bosom of my family ; soon forgotten, no doubt, I should have been regretted, at least, as long as I should have been remembered ;" when he speaks to us thus, he does indeed convince us of the sincerity of his wish and of his regret, so profound and lively is the sentiment that breathes through all his words, of the quiet, unvarying, and modest charm of a private life ! Let none of us who, in this age, have been more or less afflicted with the malady of reverie, do like those ennobled persons who disown their ancestry, and let us learn that before being the very unworthy children of the noble René, we are more certainly the grandchildren of citizen Rousseau.

The first book of the *Confessions* is not the most remarkable, but we find Rousseau in it already, quite complete, with his pride, his vices in their germ, his odd and grotesque humours, his meannesses and his obscenities (you see that I note everything) ; with his pride also, and that firm and independent spirit which exalts it ; with his happy and healthy childhood, his suffering and martyred youth, and the apostrophes to society and avenging reprisals (one foresees them), with which it will inspire him at a later day ; with his tender sentiment of domestic happiness and family life which he had so little opportunity of enjoying, and also with the first breaths of springtime, a signal of the natural revival which will appear in the literature of the nineteenth century. We run a risk to-day of being too little impressed by these first picturesque pages of Rousseau ; we are

so spoiled by colours that we forget how fresh and new these first landscapes then were, and what an event it was in the midst of that very witty, very refined, but arid society, which was as devoid of imagination as of true sensibility, and had in its own veins none of the sap which circulates, and at each season comes back again. French readers, accustomed to the factitious life of a *salon* atmosphere—the urbane readers, as he calls them—were astonished and quite enraptured to feel blowing from the region of the Alps these fresh and healthy mountain breezes which came to revive a literature that was alike elegant and dried up. It was time for this revival, and hence it is that Rousseau was not a corrupter of language, but, on the whole, a regenerator.

Before him La Fontaine alone, among us, had had as keen a relish for nature, and had known that charm of reverie in the fields; but the example had little effect; the people let the good man come and go with his fables, and kept in their *salons*. Rousseau was the first person who compelled all these fashionable people to go out of them, and to quit the great alley of the park for the true walk in the fields.

The beginning of the second book of the *Confessions* is delightful and full of freshness; Madame de Warens appears to us for the first time. In painting her, Rousseau's style becomes gentle and gracefully-mellow, and at the same time we discover a quality, an essential vein which is innate and pervades his whole manner—I mean sensuality. "Rousseau had a voluptuous mind," says a good critic; women play in his writings a great part; absent or present, they and their charms occupy his mind, inspire him and affect him, and something relating to them is mingled with all that he has written. "How," says he of Madame de Warens, "in approaching for the first time a lovely, polished, dazzling woman, a woman of a superior condition to mine, whose like I had never met, . . . how did I find myself at once as free, as much at my ease, as if I had been perfectly sure of pleasing her?"

This facility, this ease, which he will not usually feel when he finds himself in the presence of women, will always be found in his style when he paints them. The most adorable pages of the *Confessions* are those concerning that first meeting with Madame de Warens; those, also, where he describes the welcome of Madame Basile, the pretty shopkeeper of Turin: "She was brilliant and elegantly attired, and in spite of her gracious air that splendour had overpowered me. But her welcome, which was full of kindness, her compassionate tone, her soft and endearing manners, soon put me at my ease; I saw that I had succeeded, and that made me more successful." Have you never observed that brilliancy and splendour of complexion, like a ray of the Italian sun? He then relates that vivid and mute scene, which nobody has forgotten, that scene of gestures, seasonably checked, all full of blushes and young desires. Join to this the walk in the environs of Annecy with Mademoiselles Galley and de Graffenried, every detail of which is enchanting. Such pages were, in French literature, the discovery of a new world, a world of sunshine and freshness, which men had near them without having perceived it; they presented a mixture of sensibility and of nature, one in which no sensuality appeared, except so far as it was permissible and necessary to deliver us at last from the false metaphysics of the heart and from conventional spiritualism. The sensuality of the brush, in that degree, cannot displease; it is temperate also, and is not masked, which renders it more innocent than that of which many painters have since made use.

As a painter, Rousseau everywhere manifests the sentiment of reality. He shows it every time that he speaks to us of beauty, which, even when it is imaginary, like his Julia, assumes a body and perfectly visible forms, and is by no means an airy and intangible Iris. That he has this sense of reality, appears from his wishing that every scene which he recollects or invents, that every character he introduces, should be enclosed and move in a well deter-

mined place, of which the smallest details may be traced and retained.

One of the things which he found fault with in the great novelist Richardson was, that he did not connect the recollection of his characters with a locality the pictures of which one would have loved to identify. See also how he has contrived to naturalize his Julia and his Saint-Preux in the Pays-de-band, on the border of that lake about which his heart never ceased to wander. His sound, firm mind continually lends its graver to the imagination, that nothing essential to the sketch may be omitted. Finally, this sense of reality is noticeable again in the care with which, amid all his circumstances and his adventures, happy or unhappy, and even the most romantic, he never forgets to speak of repasts and the details of a good, frugal cheer, fitted to give joy alike to heart and mind.

This trait is also a material one; it is related to that citizen-like and popular character which I have noted in Rousseau. He had been hungry in his lifetime; he notes in his *Confessions*, with a feeling of thankfulness to Providence, the last time that it was his lot to experience literal want and hunger. Nor will he ever forget to introduce these incidents of real life and of the common humanity, these heart-matters, even into the ideal picture of his happiness, which he will give at a later day. It is by all these true qualities combined in his eloquence, that he seizes and holds us.

Nature, sincerely enjoyed and loved for herself, is the source of Rousseau's inspiration, whenever that inspiration is healthy, and not of a sickly kind. When he sees Madame de Warens again, on his return from Turin, he stays some time at her house, and from the room that is given him he sees gardens and discovers the country: "It was the first time," he says, "since I was at Bossey (a place where he was sent to be boarded in his childhood), that I had something green before my windows." Till then, to have or not to have something green under one's eyes, had been a matter of great indifference to French literature; it

belonged to Rousseau to make it perceive it. It is from this point of view that one might characterize him by a word: he was the first who put something green into our literature. Living thus, at the age of nineteen, near a woman whom he loved, but to whom he dare not declare his passion, Rousseau abandoned himself to a sadness which yet had nothing gloomy in it, and which was tempered by a flattering hope. Having gone to walk out of town, on a great *fête* day, whilst the people were at vespers,—

“The sound of the bells, which has always strangely affected me, the song of the birds, the beauty of the day, the softness of the landscape, the scattered and rural houses, in which I fixed in imagination our common abode, all this affected me with such a vivid, tender, sad, and touching impression, that I saw myself, as it were, in ecstasy transported to that happy time and to that happy sojourn, in which my heart, possessing all the felicity that could please it, enjoyed it with inexpressible rapture, without even dreaming of the pleasure of the senses.”

This is what the child of Geneva felt at Ancey in the year 1731, whilst at Paris people were reading the *Temple of Gnidus*. On that day he discovered the reverie, that new charm which had been left as a singularity to La Fontaine, and which he was going, himself, finally to introduce into a literature that was till then polite or positive. *Reverie*,—such is his novelty, his discovery, his own America. The dream of that day was realized by him some years afterward, in his sojourn at the Charmettes, in that walk by day from Saint Louis, which he has described as nothing like it had ever before been depicted:—

“Everything seemed to conspire to promote the happiness of that day. It had rained just before; there was no dust, and the streams were running well; a gentle breeze stirred the leaves, the air was pure, the horizon cloudless, serenity reigned in the sky as in our hearts. We took our dinner at a peasant's house, and shared it with his family, who blessed us heartily. These poor Saveyards are such good people!”

With this kindly feeling, and in this observant and simply truthful way, he continues to unfold a picture in which all is perfect, all is enchanting, and in which only the name of Mamma applied to Madame de Warens morally wounds and pains us.

That period at the Charmettes, in which this still young heart was permitted to open for the first time, is the divinest of the *Confessions*, and it will never return, even when Rousseau shall have retired to the Hermitage. The description of those years at the Hermitage, and of the passion which came to seek him there, is very fascinating also, and is more remarkable perhaps than all that precedes it; he will justly exclaim, however: It is no longer the Charmettes there! The misanthropy and the suspicion of which he is already the victim, will pursue him in that period of solitude. He will be thinking continually there of the Parisian world, of the society at D'Holbach's; he will enjoy his retreat in spite of them, but that thought will poison his purest enjoyments. His disposition will sour, and will contract during these years a henceforth incurable disorder. He will have, no doubt, some delicious moments then, and afterward, even to the end; he will find again, in Saint-Peter's Island, in the middle of Lake Bienné, an interval of calmness and of forgetfulness which will furnish him with inspiration for some of his finest pages, —that fifth walk of the *Reveries*, which, with the third letter to M. de Malesherbes, cannot be separated from the divinest passages of the *Confessions*. Nevertheless, nothing will equal in lightness, freshness, and joyousness the description of life at the Charmettes. Rousseau's true happiness, of which no one, not even himself, could rob him, was the ability thus to evoke and to retrace, with the precision and vividness which characterized his recollection, such pictures of youth, even in the years that were fullest of troubles and distractions.

The pedestrian journey, with its impressions at each moment, was also one of the inventions of Rousseau, one of the novelties which he imported into literature: it has since been greatly abused. It was not just after he had enjoyed his trip, but much later, that he thought of relating his experiences. It was only then, he assures us, when he travelled on foot, at a beautiful season, in a beautiful country, without being hurried, having for the goal of his

journey an agreeable object which he was not in too great haste to attain,—it was then that he was entirely himself, and that ideas of his which were cold and dead in the study, came to life and took flight :—

“Walking has something in it that animates and brightens my ideas : I am scarcely able to think when I keep one position ; my body must be in full swing before my mind can be so. The sight of the country, the succession of agreeable objects, the open air, the good health I gain by walking, the freedom of the inn, the removal from everything that reminds me of my situation, all this sets my soul free, gives me a greater audacity of thought, casts me, in some way, into the immensity of beings where I may combine, choose, and appropriate them at will, without hindrance and without fear. I dispose, as a master, of all nature. . . .”

Do not ask him to write, at these moments, the sublime, foolish, pleasant thoughts which pass through his mind : he likes much better to taste and to relish than to speak of them : “Besides, did I carry with me paper and pens ? If I had thought of all that, nothing would have come to me. I did not foresee that I should have ideas ; they come when it pleases them, not when it pleases me.” Thus, in all that he has since related, we should have, if we may believe him, only distant recollections and feeble remains of himself, as he was at those moments.

And yet what could be at once more true, more precise, and more delicious ? Let us recall that night which he passes in the starlight, on the bank of the Rhone or the Saone, in a hollow way near Lyons :—

“I slept voluptuously on the sill of a kind of niche or false door opened in a terrace wall. The canopy of my bed was formed of the tops of the trees ; a nightingale was just above me, I fell asleep under his song : my sleep was sweet, my waking was more so. It was broad day ; my eyes, as they opened, saw the water, the verdure, a wonderful landscape. I rose and roused myself ; I felt hungry ; I proceeded gaily towards the city, resolved to lay out for a good breakfast two six-blanc pieces * which were yet left to me.”

All the native Rousseau is there, with his reverie, his ideality, his reality, and that six-blanc piece itself, which

* A blanc is an old French copper coin. Six blancs made one and a half pence in English money

comes after the nightingale, is not too much to bring us back to the earth, and make us feel all the humble enjoyment which poverty conceals within itself when it is joined with poetry and with youth. I desired to extend the quotation as far as this six-blanc piece, to show that when we are with Rousseau we are not merely keeping company with *René* and with *Jocelyn*.

The picturesque in Rousseau is temperate, firm, and clear, even in the softest passages ; the colouring is always laid upon a well-drawn outline ; that Genevese citizen shows in this that he is of pure French extraction. If he lacks at times a warmer light and the splendours of Italy and Greece ; if, as about that beautiful Geneva lake, the north wind comes sometimes to chill the atmosphere, and if at times a cloud suddenly casts a greyish tint upon the sides of the mountains, there are days and hours of clear and perfect serenity. Improvements have since been made upon this style, and persons have believed that they have paled and surpassed it ; they have certainly succeeded in respect to certain effects of colours and sounds. Nevertheless, the style remains still the surest and the finest which one can offer as an example in the field of modern innovation. With him the centre of the language has not been too much displaced. His successors have gone farther ; they have not merely transferred the seat of the Empire to Byzantium, they have often carried it to Antioch, and even to mid-Asia. With them the imagination in its pomp absorbs and dominates all.

The portraits in the *Confessions* are lively, piquant, and spiritual—Bach, the friend, Venture, the musician, Simon, the *jugemage*, are finely seized and observed ; they are not so easily dashed off as in *Gil Blas*, they are rather engraved ; Rousseau has here recalled his first trade.

I have been unable to do more than hurriedly to indicate the leading particulars in which the author of the *Confessions* remains a master to salute this time the creator of the reverie,—him who has inoculated us with the sentiment of nature and with the sense of reality, the father of the

literature of the heart, and of internal painting. What a pity that misanthropic pride should be mingled with these excellences, and that cynical remarks should cast a stain upon so many charming and genuine beauties! But these follies and vices of man cannot overcome his original merits, nor hide from us the great qualities in which he shows himself still superior to his descendants.

J O U B E R T.

A PERSON was astonished one day that Geoffroy could return again and again to the same theatrical piece, and make so many articles upon it. One of his witty brethren, M. de Feletz, replied: "Geoffroy has three ways of making an article: to assert, to re-assert, and to contradict himself." I have already spoken more than once of M. Joubert, and to-day I would like to speak of him again, without repeating and without contradicting myself. The new edition* which is now publishing will furnish me with the occasion and perhaps with the means of doing so.

The first time that I spoke of M. Joubert, I had to answer this question, which one had a right to ask me: "Who is M. Joubert?" To-day the question will no longer be asked. Although he may not be destined ever to become popular as a writer, the first publication of his two volumes of "Thoughts and Letters," in 1842, sufficed to give him a place, at the very outset, in the esteem of connoisseurs and judges, and to-day it is only necessary to extend a little the circle of his readers.

His life was simple, and I recall it here only for those who love to become acquainted with the personality of an author. M. Joubert, who was born in 1754, and died in 1824, was, in his lifetime, as little of an author as possible. He was one of those happy spirits who pass their lives in thinking, in talking with their friends, in dreaming in solitude, in meditating upon some work which they will never accomplish, and which will come to

* Of his "Pensées, Essais, Maximes et Correspondance."

us only in fragments. These fragments, by their quality, and in spite of some faults of a too subtle thought, are in this instance sufficiently meritorious to entitle the author to live in the memory of the future. M. Joubert was, in his day, the most delicate and the most original type of that class of honest people which the old society alone produced,—spectators, listeners who had neither ambition nor envy, who were curious, at leisure, attentive, and disinterested, who took an interest in everything, the true amateurs of beautiful things. “To converse and to know,—it was in this, above all things, that consisted, according to Plato, the happiness of private life.” This class of connoisseurs and of amateurs, so fitted to enlighten and to restrain talent, has almost disappeared in France since every one there has followed a profession. “We should always,” said M. Joubert, “have a corner of the head open and free, that we may have a place for the opinions of our friends, where we may lodge them provisionally. It is really insupportable to converse with men who have, in their brains, only compartments which are wholly occupied, and into which nothing external can enter. Let us have hospitable hearts and minds.” Go, then, to-day, and demand intellectual hospitality, welcome for your ideas, your growing views, from hurried, busy minds, filled wholly with themselves, true torrents roaring with their own thoughts! M. Joubert, in his youth, coming in 1778 at the age of twenty-four from his province of Périgord to Paris, found there what one finds no longer to day; he lived there as one lived then: he chatted. What he did in those days of youth may be summed up in that single word. He chatted then with famous people of letters; he knew Marmontel, La Harpe, D’Alembert; he knew especially Diderot, by nature the most gracious and the most hospitable of spirits. The influence of the latter upon him was great, greater than one would suppose, seeing the difference in their conclusions. Diderot had certainly in M. Joubert a singular pupil, one who was pure-minded, finally a Platonist and a Christian, smitten with the *beau*

idéal and saintliness ; studying and adoring piety, chastity, modesty ; and never finding, in which to express himself upon these noble subjects, any style sufficiently ethereal, nor any expression sufficiently luminous. However, it is only by that contact with Diderot that one can fully explain the inoculation of M. Joubert with certain ideas, then so new, so bold, and which he rendered truer by elevating and rectifying them. M. Joubert had his Diderot period, when he tried everything ; later, he made a choice. Always, even at an early day, he had tact ; taste did not come to him till afterward. "Good judgment in literature," said he, "is a very slow faculty, which does not reach the last point of its growth till very late." Reaching that point of maturity, M. Joubert was sufficiently just to Diderot to say that there are many more follies of style than follies of thought in his works. It was especially for his interest and initiation in art and literature that he was indebted to Diderot. But, in falling into a soul so delicate and so light, those ideas of literary reform and of the regeneration of art, which in Diderot had preserved a kind of homely and prosaic, a smoky and declamatory character, were brightened and purified, and assumed an ideal character which approximated them insensibly to the Greek beauty ; for M. Joubert was a Greek, he was an Athenian touched with the Socratic grace. "It seems to me," said he, "much more difficult to be a modern than to be an ancient." He was especially an ancient in the calmness and moderation of his sentiments ; he disliked everything that was sensational, all undue emphasis. He demanded a lively and gentle agreeableness, a certain internal, perpetual joy, giving to the movement and to the form ease and suppleness, to the expression clearness, light, and transparency. It is principally in these that he made beauty consist :

"The Athenians were delicate in mind and ear. They never would have endured a word fitted to displease, even though one had only quoted it. One would say that they were always in good humour when writing. They disapproved in style of the austerity which reveals hard, harsh, sad, or severe manners."

He said again :

“Those proud Romans had a hard ear, which it was necessary to caress a long time to dispose them to listen to beautiful things. Hence that oratorical style which one finds even in their wisest historians. The Greeks, on the contrary, were endowed with perfect organs, easy to put in play, and which it was only necessary to touch in order to move them. Again, the simplest dress of an elegant thought sufficed to please them, and in descriptions they were satisfied with pure truth. They observed especially the maxim, *Nothing in excess*. Much choice and purity in the thoughts; words assorted and beautiful by their own harmony; finally, the sobriety required to prevent anything from weakening an impression,—these formed the character of their literature.”

Upon Pigalle and modern statuary as opposed to the ancient, one might cite from him thoughts of the same kind, whole pages which mark at once and very clearly in what respect he agrees with Diderot, and wherein he separates from him. Thus, then, about the epoch of 1789, there was in France a man already at maturity, thirty years old, eight years older than André Chénier, and fourteen years older than Chateaubriand, who was fully prepared to comprehend them, to unite them, to furnish them with incitements and new views, to enable them to extend and complete their horizon. This was the part, indeed, of M. Joubert touching M. de Chateaubriand, whom he knew in 1800, on the return of the latter from London. M. de Chateaubriand, at that fine period of his life (that fine period, for me, is the literary period, and extends from “Atala,” by “René,” by “The Martyrs,” even to the “Last of the Abencerrages”), M. de Chateaubriand had then, as a poet, a happiness which very few persons enjoy : he found two friends, two distinct critics, Fontanes and Joubert, made expressly for him, to inform him or to guide him. One has commonly but one guardian angel, he then had two : one entirely guardian, Fontanes, restraining him in private, defending him when necessary before everybody, covering him with a buckler in the *mêlée* ; the other, rather fitted to incite and to inspire,—M. Joubert, who encouraged him in an undertone, or murmured to him

sweet counsel in a contradiction full of grace. The best, the finest criticism to be made upon the first and great literary work of M. de Chateaubriand, might still be found in the "Letters and Thoughts" of M. Joubert. This is not the place to examine and to disentangle that criticism; I shall, nevertheless, touch somewhat upon it presently.

The life of Joubert is all in his thoughts; but one would not say of that life the little that is to be said of it, if one did not speak of Madame de Beaumont. That daughter of the old minister, M. de Montmorin, who escaped during the Reign of Terror from the fate of the rest of her family, and who found favour on account of her weakness and paleness, was one of those touching beings who only glide through life, and who leave there a trace of light. M. Joubert, who was already married, and who spent a part of the year at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, had met her in Burgundy at the door of a cottage, where she had taken refuge. He was immediately attracted to her; he loved her. He would have loved her with a sentiment livelier than friendship, if there had been for this exquisite soul a livelier sentiment. Madame Beaumont, still young, had infinite grace. Her mind was quick, solid, exalted; her form delicate and ærial. She had formerly known and appreciated André Chénier. Rulhière had had a seal engraved for her, which represented an oak with this device: "A breath agitates me; nothing shakes me." The device was just; but the image of the oak may seem somewhat proud. Be this as it may, that frail and graceful shell, that sensitive reed, which seemed to abandon itself to the least breath, enclosed a strong, ardent soul, capable of a passionate devotion. Struck in her tenderest place, victim of an ill-assorted union, she had little love for life; mortally attacked, she felt that it was fleeing from her, and she hastened to give it up. While waiting for death, her noble mind was prodigal of itself, happy in scattering sweet approvals about her. It has been said of Madame de Beaumont that she loved merit as others love beauty. When M. de Chateaubriand, coming to Paris, was presented to her, she

immediately recognised that merit under its most seductive form of poetry, and she adored it. Hers was, after his sister Lucille's, the first great devotion which that figure of René inspired,—that figure which was to inspire more than one other afterward, though none of greater value. With what feeling she inspired M. Joubert, it would be difficult to define: it was an active, tender, perpetual solicitude, without excitement, without uneasiness, full of warmth, full of radiance. That too lofty spirit, which knew not how to move slowly, loved to fly and perch itself near her. He had, as he said, a chilly mind; he loved to have it pleasant and warm about him; he found in her society the serenity and the warmth of affection, which he desired, and he drew strength from the indulgence. As she despised life, he preached to her constantly upon the care and love of it; he would have had her learn again to hope. He wrote to her:

“I am paid for desiring your health, since I have seen you; I know its importance, since I have it not. That, you say, will be the sooner done with. Yes, sooner, but not soon. One is a long time dying, and if, roughly speaking, it is sometimes agreeable to be dead, it is frightful to be dying for ages. Finally, we must love life while we have it: it is a duty.”

He repeats to her this truth of morality and of friendship in all its forms; he wished, if possible, to lessen and to moderate the activity which was consuming her and wasting her frail organs. He wished to insinuate Madame de La Fayette's sentiment of resignation: It is enough to be.

“Be quiet in love, in esteem, in veneration, I pray you with joined hands. It is, I assure you, at this moment the only way to commit but few mistakes, to adopt but few errors, to suffer but few ills.” “To live,” he said to her again, “is to think and to be conscious of one's soul; all the rest, eating, drinking, etc., although I value them, are but preparations for living, the means of preserving life. If one could do without them, I could easily resign myself thereto, and I could very well dispense with my body, if one would leave me all my soul.”

He had reasons for speaking thus, he of whom one has said that he had the appearance of a soul which has en-

countered a body by chance, and which gets along with it as it can. He commended to that lovely friend repose, immobility, that she should follow the only regimen which he found good for himself,—to remain a long time in bed and to *count the joists*. He added :

“Your activity disdains such a happiness ; but see if your reason does not approve of it. Life is a duty ; we must make a pleasure of it, so far as we can, as of all other duties. If the care of cherishing it is the only one with which it pleases Heaven to charge us, we must acquit ourselves gaily and with the best possible grace, and poke that sacred fire, while warming ourselves by it all we can, till the word comes to us : *That will do.*”

These tender recommendations were useless. Madame de Beaumont had so little attachment to life, that it seemed as if it depended only upon herself whether she should live. Pure illusion ! she was but too really attacked, and she herself had but little to do to hasten her end. She decided to go to the waters of Mont-Doré in the summer of 1803, and thence to set out for Rome, where she rejoined M. de Chateaubriand ; shortly after her arrival there she died. One should read the letter of M. Joubert, written during that trip to Rome. He had not believed in that departure : he had secretly hoped that she would shrink from so much fatigue and such occasions of exhaustion. The last letter which he addressed to her (October 12, 1803), is filled with an anxious tenderness ; one perceives in it a kind of revelation, long withheld, which he finally made to himself ; he had never before confessed to himself, so plainly, how much he loved her, how necessary she was to him. He wrote :

“All my mind has returned to me ; it gives me many pleasures ; but a despairing reflection corrupts them ; I have you no longer, and surely I shall not have you for a long time within reach, to hear what I think. The pleasure I formerly had in speaking is entirely lost to me. I have made a vow of silence : I remain here for the winter. My inner life is going to be spent wholly with Heaven and myself. My soul will preserve its wonted habits, but I have lost its delights.”

In conclusion, he cries :

“Adieu, adieu, cause of so many pains, who hast been for me so often the source of so many blessings. Adieu ! preserve yourself, take

care of yourself, and return some day among us, if only to give me for a single moment the inexpressible pleasure of seeing you again."

In the two preceding years (1800-1803) there had been formed about Madame de Beaumont a little *réunion*, often spoken of, which was very short in duration, but which had life and activity, and which deserves to hold a place by itself in literary history. It was the hour when society was everywhere regenerated, and many salons then offered to those who had recently been exiled and shipwrecked the enjoyments, so desired, of conversation and intellectual intercourse. There were the philosophic and literary circles of Madame Suard and Madame d'Houdetot, and that of the Abbe Morellet (held by his niece, Madame Chéron); there, properly speaking, literary people and philosophers held sway, who directly prolonged the last century. There were the fashionable salons, of a more varied and diverse composition; the salon of Madame de la Briche; that of Madame de Vergennes, where her daughter, Madame de Remusat, distinguished herself; that of Madame de Pastoret, that of Madame de Staël when she was at Paris; and yet others, of which each had its hue and its dominant tone. But, in a corner of Rue Neuve-du-Luxembourg, a salon much less visible, much less exposed, gathered together some friends in intimate union about a lady of superior quality. In that place were to be found youth, the new sentiment, and the future. The *habitués* of the place were M. de Chateaubriand, even his sister Lucille for a whole winter, M. Joubert, Fontanes, M. Molé, M. Pasquier, Chênedollé, M. Greneau de Mussy, one M. Jullien, well instructed in English literature, Madame de Ventimille. These were the body of the assemblage: the others whom one might name came only as it happened. The sun-flash which followed the eighteenth brumaire had made itself felt more in this corner of the world than elsewhere; one loved, one was open to every kind of genius, every new talent; one enjoyed each as an enchantment; imagination had flowered again, and on the door of the place one might have inscribed the saying of M.

Joubert: "Admiration has reappeared, and rejoiced a saddened earth."

These happy meetings, these complete reunions last but a day. After the loss of Madame de Beaumont, M. Joubert continued to live and to think, but with less delight; he conversed often of her with Madame de Ventimille, her closest surviving friend; but such a reunion as that of 1802 was never formed again, and, at the end of the Empire, politics and business had loosened, if not dissolved, the ties of the principal friends. M. Joubert, isolated, living with his books, with his dreams, noting his thoughts on unconnected bits of paper, would have died without leaving anything finished or enduring, if one of the relatives of the family, M. Paul Raynal, had not had the pious care to collect these fragments, to set them in a certain order, and to make of them a kind of series of precious stones. These are the volumes of which a second edition is published to-day.

Since I have spoken of precious stones, I will say, right at the beginning, that there are too many of them. An English poet (Cowley) has said: "One concludes by doubting whether the milky-way is composed of stars, there are so many of them!" There are too many stars in the heaven of M. Joubert. One would like more intervening spaces and more repose. "I am like Montaigne," said he, "unfit for continuous discourse. Upon all subjects, it seems to me, I either lack intermediate ideas, or they weary me too much." These intermediate ideas, if he had given himself the trouble to express them, would not have wearied us, it seems, but would rather have given us repose in reading him. One is conscious in his writings of an effort,—often happy, yet an effort. "If there is a man," he says, "tormented with the accursed ambition of putting a whole book into a page, a whole page into a phrase, and that phrase into a word, it is I." His method is always to express a thought in an image; the thought and the image make, for him, but one thing, and he believes that he has grasped the one only when he has found the other. "It is

not my phrase that I polish, but my idea. I stop till the drop of light which I need is formed and falls from my pen." This series of thoughts, then, are only drops of light; the mind's eye is at last dazzled by them. "I would like," says he, defining himself with marvellous correctness, "I would like to infuse exquisite sense into common sense, or to render exquisite sense common." Good sense alone wearies him; the ingenious without good sense rightly appears to him contemptible; he wishes to unite the two, and it is no small undertaking. "Oh! how difficult it is," he cries, "to be at once ingenious and sensible!" La Bruyère, before him, had felt the same difficulty, and had avowed it to himself at the beginning: "All is said, and one comes too late, now that there have been men for seven thousand years, and men, too, that have thought." M. Joubert recognises this likewise: "All the things which are easy to say well have been perfectly said; the rest is our business or our task: painful task!" I indicate at the outset the disadvantage and the fault; books of maxims and of condensed moral observations, such as that of La Bruyère, and especially such as M. Joubert's, cannot be read consecutively without fatigue. It is the mind distilled and fixed in all its sugar; one cannot take much of it at once.

The first chapters of the first volume are not those which please me most; they treat of God, of creation, of eternity, and of many other things. To the peculiar difficulty of the subjects is added that which springs from the subtlety of the author. Here it is no longer with Plato that we have to do, but with Augustine in large doses, and without any connection in the ideas. Unquestionably it will be well, one day, to make of all these metaphysical chapters a single one, much abridged, into which shall be admitted only the beautiful, simple, acceptable thoughts, rejecting all those which are equivocal or enigmatical. On these terms one may make of M. Joubert's volumes, not a library book as to-day, but (that which would be so easy to make by selection) one of those beautiful little books which he

loved, and which would justify in every respect his device :
Excel, and thou shalt live !

It is when he returns to speak of manners and of arts, of antiquity and of the century, of poetry and of criticism, of style and of taste,—it is in treating all these subjects that he pleases and charms us, that he appears to us to have made a notable and novel addition to the treasure of his most excellent predecessors. Taste, for him, is the literary conscience of the soul. Not more than Montaigne does he love the book-like or bookish style, that which savours of ink, and which one never employs except when writing : “ There should be, in our written language, voice, soul, space, a majestic air, words which subsist all alone, and carry their place with them.” This life he demands of the author, and without which style exists only on paper, he wishes also in the reader : “ The writers who have influence are only men who express perfectly what others think, and who reveal in minds ideas or sentiments that were striving to come forth. It is in the depths of minds that literatures exist.” Again, he who relished the ancients so well, the antiquity of Rome, of Greece, and of Lewis XIV., does not demand impossibilities of us ; he will tell us to appreciate that antiquity, but not to return to it. In respect to expression, he prefers again the sincere to the beautiful, and truth to appearance :

“ Truth in style is an indispensable quality, and one which suffices to recommend a writer. If, upon all sorts of subjects, we should write to-day as men wrote in the time of Lewis XIV., we should have no truth in style, for we have no longer the same dispositions, the same opinions, the same manners. A woman who would write like Madame de Sevigné would be ridiculous, because she is not Madame de Sevigné. The more the way in which one writes partakes of the character of the man, of the manners of the time, the more must the style differ from that of the writers who have been models only by having manifested pre-eminently, in their works, either the manners of their epoch or their own character. Good taste itself, in that case, permits one to discard the best taste ; for taste, even good taste, changes with manners.”

If this is already the case, so far as we are concerned,

with the style of the age of Lewis XIV., how will it be with that of remote antiquity, and can one hope to return to it? M. Joubert contents himself with desiring that we should prize and tenderly regret that which will never return :

“In the luxury of our writings and of our life, let us at least love and regret that simplicity which we have no longer, and which, perhaps, we can no longer have. While drinking from our gold, let us regret the ancient cups. Finally, that we may not be corrupted in everything, let us cherish that which is better than ourselves, and let us, in perishing, save from the shipwreck our tastes and our judgments.”

What M. Joubert demands, above all, of the moderns is, not to insist upon their faults, not to follow their inclinations, not to throw themselves in that direction with all their strength. The visionary and fickle nature, the sensual, the bombastic, the colossal, especially displease him. We have had a high opinion for some years of what we call force, power. Often when I have chanced to hazard some critical remark upon a talent of the day, the reply has been made to me: “What matters it! that talent has power.” But what kind of power? Joubert is going to reply for me: “Force is not energy; some authors have more muscles than talent. Force! I do not hate it nor do I fear it; but, thanks to heaven, I am entirely disabused in regard to it. It is a quality which is praiseworthy only when it is concealed or clothed. In the vulgar sense Lucan had more of it than Plato, Brebeuf more than Racine.” He will tell us again: “Where there is no delicacy, there is no literature. A writing in which are found only force and a certain fire without splendour, announces only character. One may produce many such, if he has nerves, bile, blood, and boldness.” M. Joubert adores enthusiasm, but he distinguishes it from explosiveness, and even from fervour, which is but a secondary quality in inspiration, and which excites whilst the other moves: “Boileau, Horace, Aristophanes, had fervour; La Fontaine, Menander, and Virgil, the gentlest and the most exquisite enthusiasm that ever was.” Enthusiasm, in that

sense, might be defined a kind of exalted peace. Fine works, according to him, do not intoxicate, but they enchant. He exacts agreeableness and a certain amenity even in the treatment of austere subjects; he requires a certain charm everywhere, even in profundity: "It is necessary to carry a certain charm even into the deepest investigations, and to introduce into those gloomy caverns, into which one has penetrated but for a short time, the pure and antique light of the ages that were less instructed but more luminous than ours." Those words *luminous* and *light* reappear frequently in his writings, and betray that winged nature that loved the heavens and high places. The brilliant, which he distinguishes from the luminous, does not seduce him: "It is very well that thoughts should shine, but it is not necessary that they should sparkle." What he most of all desires in them is splendour, which he defines a quiet, inner brilliancy, uniformly diffused, and which penetrates the whole body of a work.

There is much to be drawn from the chapters of M. Joubert upon criticism and upon style,—from his judgments upon different writers; in these he appears original, bold, and almost always correct. He astonishes at the first impression; he generally satisfies when one reflects upon his sayings. He has the art of freshening stale precepts, of renewing them for the use of an epoch which holds to tradition only by halves. On this side he is essentially a modern critic. In spite of all his old creeds and his regrets for the past, we distinguish immediately in him the stamp of the time in which he lives. He does not hate a certain appearance of elaborate finish, he sees in it rather a misfortune than a fault. He goes so far as to believe that "it is permissible to avoid simplicity, when to do so is absolutely necessary for agreeableness, and when simplicity alone would not be beautiful." If he desires naturalness, it is not the vulgar naturalness, but an exquisite naturalness. Does he always attain it? He feels that he is not exempt from some subtlety, and he excuses himself for it: "Often one cannot avoid passing through the subtle to rise

and reach the sublime, as to mount to the heavens one must pass through the clouds." He rises often to the highest ideas, but it is never by following the high-roads; he has paths that are unseen. Finally, to sum all up, there is singularity and an individual humour in his judgments. He is an indulgent humorist, who sometimes recalls Sterne, or rather Charles Lamb. He has a manner that leads him to say nothing, absolutely nothing, like another man. This is noticeable in the letters he writes, and does not fail to be wearisome at last. It appears by all marks that Joubert is not a classic but a modern, and it is by this title that he appears to me fitted, better perhaps than any other person, to give emphasis to good counsel, and to pierce us with his shafts.

I have sometimes asked myself what would be a sensible, just, natural French rhetoric, and it happened to me, once in my life, to have to treat the subject in a course of lectures to some young people. What did I have to do to avoid falling into routine, and also risking too much by novelty? I began quite simply with Pascal, with the "thoughts" on literature in which the great writer has set down some of the observations which he made upon his own art; I read them aloud, at the same time commenting on them. Then I took La Bruyère at the chapter on the "Works of the Mind." I next went to Fenelon for his "Dialogues on Eloquence," and for his "Letter to the French Academy." I read cursorily, choosing the points, and commenting on them always by means of examples, and without confining myself to the living. Vauvenargues, on account of his "Thoughts" and his "Literary Characters," came next. I then borrowed of Voltaire his articles on Taste and Style in the "Philosophical Dictionary," his "Temple of Taste," and some passages of his letters in which he judges Boileau, Racine, and Corneille. In order to extend the horizon a little at this moment, I joined some considerations upon the genius of Goethe and upon the English taste of Coleridge. Marmontel, in his "Elements of Literature," furnished me next with the article on Style, an excellent piece. I was careful not to forget

Buffon upon the same subject, who crowned the whole. Then, the classic circle completed, I gave M. Joubert to my young people for a kind of dessert, for recreation, and for a little final debauch, a debauch worthy of Pythagoras ! And so my French rhetoric found itself complete.

On the whole, if we must characterize M. Joubert, he had all the delicacy which one can desire in a mind, but he had not all the power. He was one of those meditative and fastidious minds that "are incessantly distracted from their work by immense perspectives and distant prospects of celestial beauty, of which they would like to show everywhere some image or some ray." He had in too high a degree the sentiment of the perfect and of the complete : "To perfect one's thought," cried he, "that takes time, that is rare, that imparts an extreme pleasure ; for perfected thoughts enter minds easily ; they need not even be beautiful to please ; it suffices that they be finished. The condition of the soul which has had them communicates itself to other souls, and conveys to them its own repose." He had sometimes that sweet enjoyment of finishing his thoughts, but never that of joining them together and forming a monument.

A philosopher of that time, himself an exceedingly intellectual man, was accustomed to distinguish three kinds of minds thus :

"The first, at once powerful and delicate, which excel as they understand it, execute what they conceive, and attain both the great and the true beautiful ; a rare elect among mortals !

"The second, whose chief quality is delicacy, and who feel their idea to be superior to their execution, their intelligence greater still than their talent, even when this last is very real. They are easily disgusted, disdain the easily obtained suffrages, love better to judge, to taste, and to abstain, than to remain below their idea and themselves. When they write, it is in fragments, it is for themselves alone, it is at long intervals, and in rare moments ; they have for their apportionment only an internal fecundity, which has few confidants.

"Finally, the last kind of minds comprises those who, more powerful and less delicate or less exacting, go on producing and diffusing themselves, without being too much disgusted with themselves and with their works ; and it is very happy that it is so with them, for,

otherwise, the world would run the risk of being deprived of many thoughts which amuse and which charm it, which console it for the want of those greater ones that will not come."

Is it necessary to say that M. Joubert, like M. Royer-Collard, belongs to the second class of these minds, to those who look upward and produce chiefly within?

Naturally the conversation of these men is superior to what they leave in writing, and which exhibits but the smallest part of themselves. I have been permitted to gather some flashes of the conversation of M. Joubert from the papers of Chênédollé, who took notes of them on leaving him. Would one know how Joubert talked about M. de Chateaubriand and about Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, while comparing the excellences of the two? The last week has been entirely consecrated to M. de Chateaubriand, and there has been a great festival of eloquence on his account.* Nevertheless, if I do not deceive myself, and if I see clearly in respect to certain symptoms, the moment is approaching when his high renown will have to undergo one of those general insurrections which long-continued monarchies, universal monarchies, at the final reckoning, never escape. What it will be necessary to do then, to maintain the just rights of his renown, will be, in wise criticism as in wise war, to abandon without difficulty all the parts of that vast domain which are not truly beautiful, nor susceptible of being seriously defended, and to entrench one's self in the portions which are entirely superior and durable. The portions which I call truly beautiful and inexpugnable, will be "René," some scenes of "Atala," the story of Eudore, the picture of the Roman Campagna, some fine pictures in the "Itinéraire;" to these will be joined some political and especially some polemical pages. Well, here is what M. Joubert said, one day in February, 1807, while walking with Chênédollé before the column of the Louvre, as "René," "Paul et Virginie," and "Atala" came to his recollection :

* On the sixth of December (1849) there was a great session at the French Academy for the reception of M. Noailles, who came to replace and to celebrate M. de Chateaubriand; M. Patin had replied to him.

“The work of M. de Saint-Pierre resembles a statue of white marble, that of M. de Chateaubriand a bronze statue cast by Lysippus. The style of the former is more polished, that of the latter more coloured. Chateaubriand takes for his theme heaven, earth, and hell: Saint-Pierre chooses a well-lighted earth. The style of the one has the fresher and younger look; that of the other has the more ancient look: it has the appearance of belonging to all times. Saint-Pierre seems to choose the purest and richest terms in the language: Chateaubriand borrows from all sources, even vicious literatures, but he works a real transmutation, and his style resembles that famous metal which, at the burning of Corinth, was formed by the mingling of all the other metals. The one has a varied unity, the other a rich variety.

“There is a reproach to be made against both. M. de Saint-Pierre has given to matter a beauty which does not belong to it; Chateaubriand has given to the passions an innocence which they do not have, or which they have but once. In “Atala” the passions are covered with long white veils.

“Saint-Pierre has but one line of beauty which turns and returns indefinitely upon itself, and is lost in the most graceful windings: Chateaubriand employs all the lines, even the defective ones, the breaks of which he makes contribute to the truth of the details and to the pomp of the whole.

“Chateaubriand produces with fire; he melts all his thoughts in the fire of heaven.

‘Bernardin writes by moonlight, Chateaubriand by the light of the sun.’

I will add nothing after such thoughts so worthy of memory, except that, when a new edition of M. Joubert is prepared, they should be added to it.



M. GUIZOT.

GUIZOT.

M. GUIZOT has twice addressed the public, as a writer, since February, 1848 : the first time in January, 1849, by his pamphlet, "On Democracy in France ;" the second time, in these latter days, by the "Discourse"* which we have now to notice, and which has a double end in view. This "Discourse," indeed, is designed to serve as an introduction to a new edition of the "History of the English Revolution," which appears at this time ; but it has also an evident reference to the present political situation, and almost a direct discussion of it. In discussing strictly this question : "Why did the English Revolution succeed ?" the eminent historian evidently provokes every thinking reader to ask himself this other question : "Why has the French Revolution miscarried thus far ? Why, at least, did it not succeed in the same sense as the English, and why is its final adjustment yet to be made ?"

If M. Guizot's discourse were purely political, I might let it pass without believing it to belong to my province, thus remaining faithful to my office and to my taste, which are agreed to adhere to literature ; but this "Discourse" is political only in its meaning and object ; it is purely historical in form and appearance, and as such I cannot neglect it without seeming to be unequal to an important occasion, and almost to an opportunity. It is impossible for the newspaper critic, who commonly has to hunt for or to create subjects of interest, to evade so important ones when they directly confront him. If I should pass by this "Discourse"

* "Discours sur l'Histoire de la Révolution d' Angleterre."

in silence, to speak of a book of poetry, or of an old or new novel, the public would have a right to think that literary criticism acknowledges its incompetency, that it knows its business only to a certain trifling extent; that there are subjects from which it is interdicted as too difficult or too thorny; and I have never thus regarded that criticism, which is light, no doubt, and, so far as possible, agreeable, but firm and serious when it should be, and as far as it should be.

However (and I will frankly confess it at the outset, in order that I may be so much the more at my ease afterward), I have felt a momentary embarrassment on finding myself prepared to express a direct opinion upon a work whose import is so real, and consequently upon an eminent man of whom there is so much to be said, and whom one cannot consider by halves. The writings of M. Guizot form a complete chain; you cannot touch a link, without moving, without shaking all the rest. And then we have to do, in this case, with a living writer! M. Guizot is not one of those men who are divided, and of whom one can say: I will speak of the historian, of the man of letters, without touching the politician. No, to his honour we must admit, and it is one of the very causes of his personal importance, he is one; literature and history itself have been with him only a means of action, of teaching, of influence. He adopted early certain ideas and systems, and in all ways, by the pen, by speech, in the professor's chair, on the platform, in power and out of power, he has left nothing undone to naturalize those ideas and to make them prevail in our country. And at this moment what is he doing still? Fallen yesterday, he lifts up his banner again to-day; only he raises it now in the historic form. Once more he ranges his ideas and his reasons in order of battle, as if he had never been attacked. To make an end of these precautions, which were yet indispensable, I shall not pretend to forget that Guizot has counted for much in our destinies, that, in determining them, he has been a heavy weight. The accident of February, that immense

catastrophe in which we all shared and by which we were shipwrecked, will be present to my memory. I should tell a falsehood if I should say that this last lesson of history is not joined, in my opinion, to all the others which we owe to M. Guizot, to complete them, to correct them, and to confirm me in certain judgments, which I shall try to express here as fitly as possible.

M. Guizot is one of the men of our day who, early and on every occasion, have laboured the most and written the most, and upon all sorts of subjects; one of those whose information is the most various and vast, who are best acquainted with the ancient and the modern languages and with belles-lettres; and yet he is not a *littérateur* properly so called, in the exact sense which that word conveys to me. Napoleon wrote to his brother Joseph, then king of Naples, who was very fond of literary people and of savants: "You live too much with men of letters and savants. They are coquettes with whom one must have a commerce of gallantry, but one must never dream of making a wife or a minister of any of them." This is true of many literary persons, of some even of those whom, in our day, we have seen made ministers. But it is not true either of M. Guizot or M. Thiers. Both are politicians who began by being writers; they made their start in literature, they return to it when necessary, they honour it by their works, but they do not belong, strictly speaking, to the family of *littérateurs*, that race which has its special qualities and faults. M. Guizot, perhaps, is farther from belonging to it than anybody else. There is no mind to which one can less properly apply that word *coquette*, which Napoleon used; it is a mind which, in everything, cares the least for form, for fashion. Literature has never been his end, but his means. He does nothing trivial, nothing useless. He goes in all matters to the fact, to the end, to the main point. If he writes, he does not trouble himself about a chimerical perfection; he seeks to say well what he means, and as he means it; he does not hunt for a better form of expression, thus losing time and wasting his energies. He is not smitten

with an ideal which he would realize. An executive mind, he gathers his forces and his ideas with vigour and with ardour, and sets himself resolutely to work, caring little for the form, and attaining it often by the nerve and decisiveness of his thought. When a work is done, he rarely returns to it; he does not resume it in order to revise it at leisure, to retouch it and polish it up, to improve the inexact or weak parts, and to amend the imperfections of the first draft; he passes on to another. He thinks of the present and of the morrow.

Such he was at the beginning, before he was in office, such in the intervals of his political life. When the Restoration took place, he felt that, under a peaceful government, which admitted the right of discussion and of speech, he was one of those whom their natural vocation and their merit call to take part in the affairs and in the deliberations of the country. All the while that he wrote a great deal, as much from taste as from an honourable necessity, he felt that he belonged to the class who become ministers and who govern. From the very first day he set his eye upon a lofty position, and he prepared himself for it with energy.

While waiting, however, for the hour to come when he should be an orator and a minister, he taught at the Sorbonne; he was the greatest professor of history that we have had. He founded a school; that school reigns; it reigns in part over the very persons who think they are combating it. In his "Essays on the History of France," in his "History of Civilization in Europe and in France," Guizot has developed his principles and his points of view. More precise than the Germans, generalizing more than the English, he became European by his writings before becoming such by the part he played as a public man. From the first day that he set foot in history, M. Guizot brought to it his instinct and his habits of mind; he professed to regulate it, to organize it. His first design, in crossing that vast ocean of past things, was to discover and trace a determinate direction, without being too straitened,

and without diminishing the diversity of the whole. To act impartially, to admit all the constituent elements of history, royal, aristocratic, communal, or ecclesiastic, to exclude no one of them henceforth, on condition of classifying them all and making them march under one law,—that was his ambition. It was vast, and if we may judge by the effect produced, M. Guizot has succeeded. He has been praised as he deserved. He has not been controverted as he ought. Daunou alone made some timid but judicious observations. No firm spirit, in the name of the school of Hume and Voltaire, in the name of that of experience and good sense, in the name of human humility, has come forth to declare the objections which would not have detracted from his solid merits as a thinker and classifier, which would have left untouched many of the positive portions of his work, but which would have given birth to some doubts concerning the foundation of his exorbitant pretensions.

I am one of those who doubt, indeed, whether it is granted to man to comprehend with this amplitude, with this certainty, the causes and the sources of his own history in the past; he has so much to do to comprehend it even imperfectly at the present time, and to avoid being deceived about it at every hour! Saint Augustine has made this very ingenious comparison: Suppose that a syllable in the poem of the Iliad were endowed, for a moment, with a soul and with life, could that syllable, placed as it is, comprehend the meaning and general plan of the poem? At most, it could only comprehend the meaning of the verse in which it was placed, and the meaning of the three or four preceding verses. That syllable, animated for a moment, is man; and you have just told him that he has only to will it in order to grasp the totality of the things which have occurred on this earth, the majority of which have vanished without leaving monuments or traces of themselves, and the rest of which have left only monuments that are so incomplete and so truncated!

This objection does not address itself to M. Guizot only,

but to the whole doctrinaire school of which he has been the organ and the most active and influential worker. It addresses itself to many other schools, also, which believe themselves distinct from that, and which have split upon the same rock. The danger is very real to any person, especially, who would pass from history to politics. History thus seen from a distance,—mark the fact!—undergoes a singular metamorphosis, and produces an illusion, the worst of all because one believes it a reality. Under this more or less philosophical arrangement which one gives to history, the deviations, the follies, the personal ambitions, the thousand strange accidents which compose it, and of which those who have observed their own times know that it is composed,—all this disappears, is neglected, and is judged but little worthy of being taken into the account. The whole acquires, after the fact, a rational appearance which is deceptive. The fact becomes a view of the mind. One judges henceforth only from above; he puts himself, insensibly, in place of Providence. He finds in all the individual accidents inevitable chains, necessities, as they are called. But if he afterward proceeds from study to practice, he is tempted to forget, in dealing with present things, that one has incessantly to deal with human passions and follies, with human inconsistency. He desires at the present time, and even at the very hour, certain net results, as he fancies that they existed in the past. He deals authoritatively with experience. In this age of sophists in which we live, it is in the name of the philosophy of history that each school (for each school has its own) comes imperiously to demand the innovation, which, in its eyes, is no more than a rigorous and legitimate conclusion. It is well to see how, in the name of that pretended historic experience which is nothing more than logic, each one presumptuously arrogates the present and claims the future as his own.

M. Guizot knows better than we these inconveniences, and he would combat them, if there were occasion, in his own masterly way. But he has not been exempt from

these errors himself, and, by his ascendancy, he has authorized these general ways of viewing events. His philosophy of history is by far too logical to be true, and none the less so for being more specious than others, and for resting upon facts. I see in it only an artificial method, convenient for keeping an account of the past. All the forces which have not produced their effect, and which, nevertheless, might have produced it, are suppressed. All those which can be recovered and gathered together are arranged in the best order, and under complex names. All the lost causes, which have not had their representative, or which have been finally vanquished, are declared to have been born feeble, and from the outset doomed to defeat. And often what a trifle has prevented them from being triumphant! The very old facts are the ones which lend themselves most readily to this kind of systematic history. They are no longer living; they reach us scattered, piecemeal; they permit themselves to be commanded and trained at will when a capable hand attempts to arrange and reconstruct them. But modern history offers more resistance. M. Guizot knows it well. In his "History of Civilization in Europe," it is only when he comes to the sixteenth century that he entertains any doubts about the advantages of hasty generalizations; it is only then, also, that these objections start up of themselves on all sides, and we re-enter the stormy and variable atmosphere of modern and present times. The generalization which seems profound in respect to far distant ages, would seem shallow and rash in respect to nearer ones. Let us well understand each other: I admire that far-reaching and ingenious force of mind which recreates, which restores all of the past that can be restored, which gives it a meaning, if not the true, at least a plausible and probable meaning, which controls the disorder in history, and which furnishes useful bases and directions for its study. But what I would point out as a danger is the habit of wishing to draw conclusions from a past thus recreated and reconstructed,—from a past artificially simplified,—concerning the moving, various, and

changing present. For myself, when I have read some of these lofty lessons, so clear and so trenchant, upon the "History of Civilization," I speedily reopen a volume of the "Memoirs" of Retz, that I may come back to the real world of intrigue and of human masquerades.

We touch here upon one of the essential reasons why the historian, even the great historian, is not necessarily a great politician or a statesman. These are talents which approximate, which resemble each other, and which one is tempted to confound, but which in some important respects differ. The historian is employed to describe the malady when the sick man is dead. The statesman is employed to treat the sick man while he is still living. The historian deals with "facts accomplished" and simple results (at least, relatively simple): the politician confronts a certain number of results, of which more than one may chance at any moment to vanish.

Some recent facts have demonstrated this last truth. I appeal here to everybody's good sense, and say: In politics, there are several different ways in which a thing that is begun may turn out. When the thing is done, we see only the event. That which passed under our eyes in February is a notable example. The thing might have turned out in many different ways. Fifty years hence one will maintain perhaps (according to the method of the doctrinaires) that it was a necessity. In a word, there are many possible defiles in the march of human affairs. In vain does the absolute philosopher tell you: "In history I love the main roads; I believe only in the main roads." Good sense replies: "These main roads are most frequently made by the historian. The main road is made by enlarging the defile which one has passed, and at the expense of the other defiles which one might have passed."

A positive mind, that knows how to combine the practical result and the abstract view, M. Guizot did not care to embarrass himself very long with these historic formulas in which a German professor would have dwelt for ever. He stated them, but he did not shut himself up in them.

In 1826 he knew how to choose, as material for history, a subject which was most happy in its analogies to our own political situation, and which, besides, was in all respects most fitting to his abilities : he undertook the "History of the English Revolution." Two volumes only of that History have appeared thus far, and the recital goes only to the death of Charles I. M. Guizot, after a long interruption, resumes his task to-day, and he signalizes his return to it by the remarkable "Discourse" which one may read. Amid the interruptions and the chasms there is this in common between the beginning in 1826 and the resumption in 1850, that he published the "History" then as a lesson given to that time, and it is also by the title of a lesson given to our own time, that he returns to his task to-day. In 1826 the lesson was addressed to royalty which wanted to be absolute, and to the ultras. In 1850 it is addressed to the democracy. But why, then, a lesson always? Does not history, thus presented, run a risk of going out of the way and of being made a little to order?

Be this as it may, the two published volumes of this "History of the English Revolution" have a real interest, and offer a grave and manly recital, a series of facts that form a firm and dense tissue, with great and lofty parts. The scenes of the death of Strafford and the trial of Charles I. are treated simply, and with great dramatic effect. That which was more difficult, and which M. Guizot excels in setting forth, is the debates, the discussions, the disagreements of parties, the parliamentary side of the history, the state of the ideas in the different groups at a given moment ; he understands in a masterly way this marshalling of ideas. Sprung from a Calvinist family, he has kept up a certain austere tone of theirs, a talent for comprehending and reproducing those tenacious natures, those energetic and gloomy inspirations. The habits of race and early education stamp themselves on the talents and reappear in the speech, even when they have disappeared from the habits of our life ; we keep their fibre and their tone. The men, the characters, are expressed, as we meet them, by vigorous strokes ; but

the whole lacks a certain splendour, or rather a certain continuous animation. The personages do not live with a life of their own ; the historian takes them, seizes them, and gives their profile in brass. His plan implies a very bold and confident execution. He knows what he wants to say, and where he wants to go. The ridiculous and ironical side of things, the sceptical side, of which other historians make too much, has with him no place. He shows plainly a kind of moral gravity in men amid their manœuvrings and intrigues ; but he does not set the contradiction in a sufficiently strong light. He gives us, on the way, many stale maxims, but none of those moral reflections which instruct and delight, which recreate humanity and restore it to itself, like those which escape incessantly from Voltaire. His style, which is emphatically his own, is sad and never laughs. I have given myself the pleasure of reading at the same time the corresponding pages of Hume : one would not believe that the same history was treated, so different is the tone ! What I remark especially is, that it is possible for me, in reading Hume, to check him, to contradict him sometimes : he furnishes me with the means of doing so by the very details he gives, by the balance he strikes. In reading Guizot this is almost impossible, so closely woven is the tissue, so interlinked is the whole narrative. He holds you fast and leads you to the end, firmly combining the fact, the reflection, and the end in view.

How far, even after these two volumes, and regarding his writings as a whole, is M. Guizot a historical painter ? How far and to what extent is he properly a narrator ? These would be very interesting questions to discuss as literary ones, without favour and without prejudice ; and, whatever fault one might find with M. Guizot, it would necessarily be accompanied with an acknowledgment of a peculiar originality, which belongs only to him. Even when he narrates, as in his "Life of Washington," it is of a certain abstract beauty that he gives us an impression, not of an external beauty that is designed to please the eyes. His language is strong and ingenious ; it is not naturally pictur-

esque. He uses always the graver, never the brush. His style, in the fine passages, is like reflections from brass, and, as it were, of steel, but reflections under a grey sky, and never in the sunlight. It has been said of the worthy Joinville, the ingenuous chronicler, that his style "savours still of his childhood," and that "worldly things are created for him only on the day when he sees them." At the other extremity of the historic chain, with Guizot, it is quite the contrary. His thought, his very recital, assumes spontaneously a kind of abstract, half-philosophical appearance. He communicates to everything that he touches, a tint, so to speak, of an anterior reflection. He is astonished at nothing; he explains whatever he presents to you, he gives the reason for it. A person who knew him well said of him: "That which he has known only since morning, he appears to have known from all eternity." In fact, an idea in entering that lofty mind loses its freshness; it instantly fades, and becomes in a manner antique. It acquires premeditation, firmness, weight, temper, and sometimes a gloomy splendour.

All this being said, it is just to admit that in the second volume of the "History of the English Revolution," there are passages of a continuous narrative which are irreproachable. It is when M. Guizot abandons himself to his favourite manner, as in the late "Discourse," that everything in his writing naturally turns into reflections. The very description of a fact is already a result.

But we cannot properly estimate M. Guizot as a writer, unless we also speak of the orator. The one is closely connected with, and has reacted on, the other. Generally, it is the writer (as Cicero has observed) that contributes to form the orator. In Guizot, it is rather the orator that has contributed to perfect the writer, and some one has gone so far as to say that it is upon the marble of the tribune that he has finished polishing his style. M. Guizot, in his first attempts, did not always write well; at least, he wrote very unequally. As soon, however, as his feelings were roused, in his polemical articles, in his pamphlets, he had much point and sharpness. For a long time I have heard it said

that M. Guizot did not write well. It is necessary to think twice before denying that he has a certain quality; for, with that tenacious and ardent will of his, he may not be long in winning the very quality which one denies to him, and in saying, "Here it is!" As a professor, M. Guizot spoke well, but with nothing extraordinary in his manner; there was clearness, a perfect lucidity of expression, but along with repetitions of abstract terms; very little elegance, little warmth. One has always the warmth of his ambition. The ambition of M. Guizot was not to feel at ease, and at home, as it were, till he should enter upon the parliamentary stage, into the heart of political struggles; it was then that he became wholly himself and began to grow. He needed some apprenticeship still; but from 1837 he displayed all his talent. He had not merely what I call the warmth of his ambition; he had at moments its flame in his speech. That flame, however, burst forth chiefly in his look, gesture, and action. His speech, taken separately, has force and nerve rather than fire. I check myself in these praises. One cannot, if he is patriotic, confine himself here to the literary point of view; for—is it possible to forget it?—that speech has translated itself into acts, it has had too real consequences. That marvellous faculty of authority and serenity (to take a word which he affects), that sovereign art of imparting to things an apparent simplicity, a deceitful clearness, which is purely fanciful, was one of the principal causes of the illusion which destroyed the last administration. Eloquence, to that extent, is a great power; but is it not also one of those deceitful powers of which Pascal has spoken? In the last years of the preceding administration, there were two very distinct atmospheres, that within the Chamber and that without. When the eloquence of M. Guizot had reigned within, when it had refilled and renovated that artificial atmosphere, it was believed that the storms had been conjured away. But the atmosphere without was so much the more charged, and out of equilibrium with the air within. Hence the final explosion.

The style of M. Guizot has come forth from these trials of the tribune firmer and better tempered than before; his thought has come forth unmodified. The present "Discourse," which he has just published, attests this statement. This "Discourse" is written with a master's hand, but it has also a master's tone. He views the English Revolution in its whole course, from the beginning of the troubles under Charles I. till after the reign of William III., and even till the complete consolidation of the Settlement of 1688. Looking at the direct intention which is visible in the picture, and which appears formally in the conclusions, it is clear that in the eyes of the eminent historian, all the lessons which that English Revolution, already so fertile in real or false analogies, may furnish us, are not exhausted. This prepossession with the English government and with the English remedy applied to our malady, does not seem to me less grave an error, and one that has been already sufficiently fatal, because it is a more specious one and touches us more nearly. For example, much has been said, under the preceding constitutional government of the land of law: "The land of law is the one for us; ours is the land of law." To what has this led? In England such a saying is significant; for there, before everything else, one has respect for law. In France, it is to other instincts that one must appeal, it is other feelings that one must lay hold of, to maintain even the land of law. The Gallic people are rapid, tumultuous, inflammable. Is it necessary to recall to the historian who has known and described the two countries, these essential differences of genius and of character? Yet it is through the character rather than through the ideas that men are governed. A foreigner, a man of genius, was accustomed to divide human nature into two parts, human nature in general and the French nature, meaning that the latter so sums up and combines in it the inconstancies, the contradictions, and the caprices of the other, that it forms a variety, and a kind of distinct species. M. de la Rochefoucauld, who had seen the Fronde and all its changes, said one day to Cardinal Mazarin:

“Everything happens in France!” It was the same moralist, a contemporary of Cromwell, who was the author of that other saying, which is so true, and which too many systematic historians forget: “Fortune and humour govern the world.” Understand by humour the temperament and character of men, the stubbornness of princes, the complaisance and presumption of ministers, the irritation and the spite of party chiefs, the turbulent disposition of the peoples, and say, you who have had experience of public affairs, and who speak no longer in front of the stage, if that is not to a great extent true. It is then only with the utmost discreetness, it seems to me, that one should propose general remedies made up only of speculations. M. Guizot, after having considered in his masterly way the English and the American Revolutions, recognises in them three great men, Cromwell, William III., and Washington, who remain in history as the chiefs and representatives of those sovereign crises that determined the fate of two powerful nations. He characterizes them, one after the other, by broad outlines. All three succeeded, the last two the most completely, Cromwell less so: he succeeded only in maintaining his own position, and founded nothing. M. Guizot attributes this difference to the fact that William III. and Washington, “even amidst a revolution, never accepted nor acted upon the revolutionary policy.” He believes that Cromwell’s misfortune was in having at first, by the necessity of his position, to adopt and practise a policy whose alloy rendered his power always precarious. M. Guizot concludes from this, that under all forms of government, whether a monarchy or a republic is concerned, an aristocratic society or a democratic, the same light shines forth from the facts; ultimate success is obtained, he says, only in the name of the same principles and by the same means. The revolutionary spirit is as fatal to the great persons whom it raises up as to those whom it casts down.

M. Guizot will permit me here to say that this conclusion, while it is generally true, is perfectly vague and sterile. To say generally to those who govern a State, that they must

not be in any degree revolutionary, is not to give any indication whatever of the ways and means, the contrivances necessary to preserve it; for it is in the detail of each situation that the difficulty lies, and that there is a field for skill. If you go and say to a commander of an army, "Adopt only the defensive method, never the offensive," will he be much better prepared to gain a battle? As if there were no moments, also, when, to defend Rome, it is necessary to go and attack Carthage!

In what relates to men in particular, the conclusion of M. Guizot appears to me much too absolute. Cromwell, you say, only half succeeded, because he was revolutionary. I will add that Robespierre afterward fell through the same cause, and for other reasons besides. But Augustus succeeded in both characters. He was by turns Octavius and Augustus; he proscribed and he founded an empire. And as that same Augustus tells us so eloquently by the mouth of the great Corneille:

Mais l'exemple souvent n'est qu'un miroir trompeur;
Et l'ordre du Destin, qui gêne nos pensées,
N'est pas toujours écrit dans les choses passées.
Quelquefois l'un brise où l'autre est sauvé,
Et par où l'un périt un autre est conservé.

This is the only practical philosophy of history: nothing absolute, an experience always called in question again, and the unexpected concealing itself in resemblances.

Bossuet has the habit, in his views, of introducing Providence, or rather he does not introduce it: it reigns, with him, in a continual and sovereign way. I admire that religious inspiration in the great bishop; but, practically, it has led him to divine right and sacred politics. In the modern historians, who have risen to general and purely rational views, Providence intervenes only at intervals, and, so to speak, at the great moments. The more discreet and rare that intervention is, as described by them, the more real reverence it attests; for, in many cases, when one is prodigal of it, it may seem much rather an implement of discourse, an oratorical and social effect, than a heartfelt

and truly sincere exaltation. This is not the case with M. Guizot. He has from the beginning cherished the religious sentiment, a turn of mind and, as it were, habitual gesture directed toward Providence. For a man, however, who reverences and worships it to such a degree, he makes, I think, too frequent and too familiar use of that mysterious intervention. He says :

“The fall of Clarendon has been ascribed to the faults of his character, and to certain faults of or checks to his policy, at home or abroad. This is to ignore the greatness of the causes which decide the fates of eminent men. Providence, which imposes upon them a task so hard, does not treat them so rigorously as to refuse to pardon their weaknesses, and inconsiderately to overthrow them, on account of certain wrongs they have done, or certain defeats of their policy. Richelieu, Mazarin, Walpole, had their defeats, committed faults, and experienced checks as grave as those of Clarendon. But they understood their time ; the aims and efforts of their policy were in harmony with its needs, with the general condition and movement of minds. Clarendon was deceived about his epoch ; he did not recognise the meaning of the great events in which he took part. . . .”

So, you appear to believe that Providence proceeds with more ceremony when it deals with those eminent men whom one calls Mazarin or Walpole, than when it deals with simply honest private people ! You leave to these last the petty causes and the paltry accidents which decide their destiny. As for the others, the real statesmen, the ambitious men of high rank, you believe that they never succumb except from motives worthy of them,—worthy of the painful sacrifice to which they subject themselves in governing us. In a word, you believe that Providence thinks twice before it causes them to fall. For myself, I believe that at the moment that it looks at the matter, a single glance and a single rule answers with it for all. But of that rule we are profoundly ignorant.

I might select again some other assertions equally absolute, equally gratuitous, and which make me doubt the intrinsic reasonableness of this imposing philosophy. But if one examines the “ Discourse ” with respect to the subject itself of which it treats, that is to say, the English Revolu-

tion, there is much to praise. When I question the possibility of man's attaining to the thousand distant and various causes, I am far from objecting to that order of considerations and conjectures by which, within determinate limits, one tries to connect effects with their causes. It is the noble science of Machiavelli and Montesquieu, when they both treat of the Romans. The English Revolution, considered in its proper elements and in its limits, that Revolution which presents itself to us, as it were, shut up in an enclosed field, lends itself better than any other, perhaps, to such a study, and M. Guizot is better fitted than any other person to treat it properly, without mingling with it those disputed conclusions which each one draws for himself. We might point out in his "Discourse" some portraits vigorously and saliently drawn, notably those of Monk and Cromwell. Finally,—need it be said?—the talent which shows us all this is masterly. But even when we consider only the conclusions concerning the English Revolution, the chain of causes and effects, as there set forth, will appear too extended. The author, at each decisive crisis, is not content with explaining it; he declares that it could not have taken place otherwise. It is habitual for him to say: "It was too soon . . . it was too late . . . God was beginning simply to execute His laws and to give His lessons" (page 31). What do you know about it?

Let us remain men in history. Montaigne, who loved it better than any other reading, has given us the reasons for his predilection, and they are ours. He loved, he tells us, only the simple and ingenuous historians who recounted facts without choice or selection, in good faith; or, among the other more learned and nobler historians, he loved only the best, those who know how to choose and to say that which is worthy of being said. But the intermediate ones (as he calls them) "spoil all for us; they wish to chew the mouthfuls for us; they lay down rules for judging, and consequently for bending history to their fancy; for since the judgment leans to one side, they cannot help turning and twisting the narration according to that bias." That

is the rock, and a talent, even of the first order, does not save one from it. At least, an experience absolutely perfect is necessary to guard one against it, as it seems to me. The superior men, who have been acquainted with public affairs, and who have relinquished them, have a great rôle still to fill, but on condition that that rôle be quite different from the first, and that it even be no longer a rôle. Initiated as they have been into the secret of things, into the vanity of good counsels, into the illusion of the best minds, into human corruption, let them sometimes tell us something of these things ; let them not disdain to make us touch with our finger the little springs which have often played at the greatest moments. Let them not always force humanity. The lesson which springs out of history must not be direct and stiff ; it must not be fired off at us point-blank, so to speak, but should sweetly exhale and insinuate itself. It should be savoury, as we said lately regarding Commynes ; it is a lesson entirely moral. Do not fear to show these mean things in your great pictures ; the dignity will find its way into them afterward. The nothingness of man, the littleness of his most exalted reason, the inanity of that which once appeared wise, all the labour, study, talent, accomplishment, and meditation that are needed to frame even an error,—all this leads back also to a severer thought, to the thought of a supreme force ; but then, instead of speaking in the name of that force which baffles us, we bow down, and history yields all its fruit.



MADAME ROLAND.

MADAME ROLAND.*

I.

THE French Revolution has repeatedly changed its aspect towards the individuals who claim to be its offspring, and whom it certainly produced. As time elapses, differences in the manner of regarding it increase among the progeny, which was at first unanimous in its mode of recognition. The more ardent, those who claim to be the more advanced, have a growing tendency to systematize the Revolution in their own minds; their aim is to co-ordinate men and things under high-sounding but hollow political and social formulas, which seem to us to torture the varied events with which they have to deal, and to impose upon them, by main force, a fallacious interpretation quite independent of the miserable passions by which, for the most part, they were controlled. Under cover of the general principles to which they are devoted, these men are endeavouring to manufacture an imposing mask for individual monstrosities and figures of unparalleled ugliness. Others, not adopting their formulas, who, when the way to democracy was opened, in '89, conceived more moderate and apparently more practicable hopes, but who see that after the lapse of forty years, as at the very outset, every step is attended by difficulties, checks, and disappointments, are at last tempted to regard the programme of that day as little else than a grand and generous illusion of our forefathers, a promised but deeply-involved inheritance, which has been constantly

* This fragment served as an introduction to the publication by Eugène Renduel, in 1835, of the inedited letters of Mme. Roland.

deteriorating in value, until it is now three-fourths wasted. There is a medium between this disheartening resignation and the exaggerated ideas of the other party. No doubt the majority of the authors and heroes of the Revolution, could they return for a season to the midst of us, and see for what their blood was shed, would smile somewhat compassionately, unless, indeed, the lapse of years had cooled the ardour of their old requirements, and tranquillized the flow of their blood. Yet an unquestionable gain has been made in comfort, if not in glory : we have equality in our manners, if not grandeur in our deeds ; civil enjoyments, if not political character ; a certain facility in the employment of different orders of industry and talent, if not the consecration of such talent to the common interest of our country. For ourselves, who adopt and enjoy these results, realizing all the while their poverty in comparison with that of which we dreamed, who believe in social perfection, however slow and increasingly difficult of attainment, thanks to the fallibility of all men, we continue at intervals to turn our eyes towards those horizons whose widespread blazonry illumined our own morning, towards those names which we have so often invoked in the hope of being able to reproduce the example and the virtues of those who bore them. Times have changed, indeed, and so have duties, and it would be vain to attempt to make direct applications ; still, from the fiery furnace of our first revolution, side by side with vile and shapeless abortions, there came forth noble statues, which are shining in their places still. Let us maintain intercourse with these beings ; let us beg them to impart to us their lofty thoughts ; let us admire their heroism and disinterestedness, as we admire those grand characters of Plutarch whom we love to study in themselves, apart from the causes they espoused, or the fate of the cities they rendered famous.

More than ever, where so regarded, does the immortal Gironde become a limit where our thoughts are fain to linger, which they refuse to overpass. Of course what followed must be understood and explained, for thereby our

country, though stained and mutilated, was in some sort protected too. All this should be understood ; but, with a few rare exceptions, our admiration and regard are elsewhere. When we see the deadly and increasing repugnance excited in their posterity by those men of gigantic stature, whom the glare of the thunderbolt too often shows besmeared with mud and livid with gore,—when we consider the bold logic of their characteristic doctrines, and how soon these were made the occasion or pretext for terror and counter-oppressions,—we cannot wonder that their crimes, their violent, iniquitous, inhuman measures should have left, if only upon the diseased imaginations of their descendants, permanent, fatal, contagious marks, which reveal themselves now in exaggerated imitation of their theory, now in narrow and pusillanimous fears. But while with some the tumult of memory redoubles, with me it subsides and clears ; and I turn more and more towards those noble and merciful figures, who, simultaneously, by a sublime instinct and with a pitiful cry, stopped short beside the river of blood, and who, by their errors, their sincere illusions, by that very softness of youth which their savage enemies attributed to corruption, but which was only the weakness of honest men,—finally, also, by the few eternal verities which they confessed,—interest every one who has a human heart, and naturally attract the thought which can rise clear of sophistry to the search for human happiness. *Mme. Roland* is the foremost and the finest figure in that group. She is its genius,—strong, pure, graceful. She is its muse, glorious and austere, with all the sanctity of martyrdom. But the idealized form of expression which our subject naturally suggests ought studiously to be restrained, for in approaching this illustrious woman we have to deal with a simple, grave, historic personage.

She has been so painted by her own hand that one would hardly care to follow her. Add the few original traits furnished by *Lemontey* and other contemporaries who had seen her, and we have but to turn for the essential features of her personality to her delicious and indispensable *Memoirs*.

Who would tell the story of Jean Jacques,—his childhood, his early struggles, his tender years, who would sketch the peculiarities of his youthful physiognomy after the Confessions? So with Mme. Roland. We may not retouch the nice drawing of those delicate and spirited features,—stately and gracious, intelligent and sweet,—nor dream even of reproducing that pure and simple profile, so modest yet so proud. Neither may we venture to retrace those days of childhood, whose freshness of delight she fixed in colours so vivid behind the gratings of the Abbaye or of Sainte-Pélagie, from her father's studio in the Quay des Lunettes, and that favourite corner of the little drawing-room which was her chosen retreat; from her catechizings in the church of Saint-Barthelemy, her retirement to the convent in the Rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne for her first communion, and her rambles in the Jardin des Plantes, to her happy and grateful sojourn with her grandmamma Phlipon, in the Isle of Saint-Louis; her return to the paternal quay near the Point Neuf, and her Sunday excursions to the woods of Meudon: All this has been done and may be read. These details,—so truthful, so natural, so happy in their aptitude and freedom of expression; these innocent and tender memories, rejoicing in their own brightness amid the dark and bloody framework ever narrowing about them, and destined soon prematurely to suppress and crush them altogether,—go to make up a book whose charm is healthful and immortal, whose perusal tempers the soul,—none more so,—which is strengthening and admonitory, though so moving to the heart.

The correspondence with Bancal, and a few other unpublished letters which we have had the opportunity to examine, show us Mme. Roland during a portion of her life, passed lightly over in her Memoirs, after her purely private and domestic years, and before her husband's appointment to the ministry. Among the letters to Bosc published in the last edition of the Memoirs, only a very few are referable to this epoch,—that is, to the interval between 1789 and 1792,—the latest period of her residence at Lyons and her earliest months in Paris; while the correspondence with Bancal comprises

precisely this interesting period. The impressions produced by the memorable events then daily taking place, faithfully and minutely transmitted by that grand, responsive soul, and confided to the ear of friendship, constitute a harvest precious to gather. The frequent and conflicting shocks, the premature hopes succeeded by despondency, the fervid revivals, the exaggerated and passionate judgments pronounced in wrath and afterwards softened, the frequent mingling of sound sense, the unfailing sincerity,—all these things help to make these artless pages an honourable testimonial to her who penned them, and at the same time, as we think, a useful lesson to those who seek in the records of the past some wisdom to aid, some rule to guide them, in forming their political opinions, some curb to their first generous transports. Nowhere else are we so fully made to realize that the importance of a definite end and deliberate progress was utterly overlooked by these men of the Gironde, who flung themselves desperately between M. Necker and Robespierre, and turned and faced the latter too late to escape defeat and destruction at his hands.

Mme. Roland and her husband had welcomed the Revolution of 1789 with enthusiasm. Since 1784 they had been established in the district of Lyons, passing some of the winter months in that town, and the greater part of the year now at Villefranche, and now two leagues distant at the close of La Plâtière, a little rural demesne in sight of the woods of Alix and hard by the village of Thézée. M. Roland, being inspector of manufactures, was devoted to industrial and economic studies, which his wife shared and enlivened by readings in philosophy and poetry. The Revolution, and the expansive impulse which it communicated to all patriotic hearts, naturally put them in correspondence with sundry active individuals in Paris. They became especially intimate with Brissot,—whose writings on the blacks and correspondence with the Marquis de Chastellux M. Roland greatly admired, and who was just starting the Patriot,—and with Bancal, who had recently abandoned the profession of notary to devote himself to

letters and politics, and whom Lanthenas, an intimate friend and servant of the Rolands, had met during a visit to the capital. The letters to Brissot, inedited for the most part, are in the hands of M. de Montrol, whom we cannot too strongly urge to make them public, and to whose kindness we owe their perusal. The opening of the correspondence with Brissot is very like that of the correspondence with Bancal. "If my excellent friend," wrote Mme. Roland to the former, in the early part of the year 1790, "had been a few years younger, America would ere this have received us in her arms; but we regret that promised land the less in that we now hope for a country of our own. The Revolution, imperfect though it be, has changed the face of France. It is developing character where before there was none. It is opening a free course to Truth, whereby her worshippers may profit." We can see that the swift conquests of 1789 were far from satisfying her, and her aversion and contempt for the leading men of that first epoch are not slow to appear. One week after the royal sitting of February 4, 1790, the swearing of the civic oath, and the address of Louis XVI., which aroused such general enthusiasm, she wrote to Brissot, "Opinion is much divided here. The address is ascribed to M. Necker; but although there are some ministerial turns of expression at the beginning, and a little of that pathos which is rather common with him, the prevailing tone does not seem to us like his, and there are occasional touches of sentiment such as he, with his subterfuges and affectations, would never have known how to utter." This radical prejudice against M. Necker—which originated before 1788, as we see by a word in a letter to M. Bosc, and which we find expressed in a rather unseemly fashion in the correspondence with Bancal (page 12)—is nought else, in its primitive crude form, but the instinctive and well-nigh invincible hostility of the Girondists to the doctrinary * mind,—an hostility, moreover,

* The term *doctrinaire* was introduced under the Restoration, and applied to those men whose private political opinions were subordinated to a body of doctrine half liberal and half conservative.—TR.

bitterly reciprocated by the latter. In Mme. Roland and M. Necker we behold the earliest manifestation of this antagonism ; but the parties, or at least the political families to which they severally belonged, have been so far perpetuated that their characteristics may now be generalized without reference to individuals. The Girondist type, reproduced in the youth of each successive generation, is ardent, adventurous, prone to popular sympathies, overweeningly confident in rapid reforms, simple methods, and the might of individual liberties ; ever distrustful of its foes, but never of its allies ; promptly and openly resentful of all that savours of secrecy or subterfuge ; unhesitating in its denial of sentiment and heart to all who effectually bar its progress. The latter, in their turn, comfortably restrictive and negative in their prudence, never hesitating, if, amid the complexities of their system such need arise, to limit and encroach on the right from motives of policy, become extremely obnoxious to minds of the Girondist stamp, whom alternately they affect to despise as poor politicians, and in their eagerness to prove them dangerous, confound with the Jacobin party in one common condemnation. Mme. Roland, when she imputed Machiavelianism to M. Necker, to the committees of the Constituent Assembly, and to the national notabilities of 1790, was also guilty of excess. Far removed from the principal focus and from the details of those events, actual observation of which, after the 5th of October, might have helped to exhaust her surplus zeal and discourage her faith, she was keenly alive to the vacillation and sluggishness of the Assembly, and its attempts at procrastination. She interpreted the struggles of Paris too literally by those of Lyons, where the old and new régime came into direct collision. Early disgusted with Lyons, and despairing of any result from the blind and passionate struggle of conflicting interests there going on, she did but aggravate the irritation of the general quarrel, the progress of which she had not closely followed, but whose complicated nature, even had she been at hand during its first phase of enthusiasm, she might all the same

have failed to appreciate. Entirely misconceiving the increasingly difficult duty which devolved upon the sincere men of 1789, she beheld, thenceforth, in the patriotic opposition and the members of the Assembly only the friends and enemies of the people in hostile array, and was convinced that nothing could come of it but a fierce struggle. Thus the starting-point of her political career was in reality a grave mistake, an erroneous view of the situation. She was in this mood of mind when she arrived in Paris in February of 1791. She had chosen her side, and was already deeply pledged, and all her Lyonnese resentments she brought, like fresh troops, to the aid of Brissot and the rest.

The letters of Mme. Roland to Bancal and Brissot furnish numbers of interesting facts relative to the history of Lyons at that time. As we compare them with recent events (and how can we fail to do so when we see the same interests at stake, the same dissensions revived, the same devices upon the banners?), we see how the old sore remains and has spread, and how little, in the space of forty years, our vaunted social science has effected in the way of cure. We are humbled to perceive how moderate have been our gains, despite the perpetual invocation of that god, Progress, whom men are everywhere inaugurating.

Mme. Roland strikes us, at the beginning, as one of the most eloquent and incorruptible, and altogether one of the fittest models to study, of that race of politicians who had longed for 1789, and whom 1789 did not fatigue,—nor even satisfy. From the first she is consciously and confessedly in the vanguard. “Destiny, in causing our own birth to coincide with that of freedom, has made us like that forlorn hope which must needs fight and conquer for the army. It is for us to perform our tasks well, and so prepare the happiness of future generations.” While she continues to take this broad philosophic view of the situation, her magnanimous attitude is in harmony with truth, and time has only consecrated her words. The spirit of disinterestedness requisite in public affairs finds noble and vigorous expression beneath her pen. “When one is not used,” she

says, "to identify his own interest and honour with the general good and glory, he makes but insignificant progress, being absorbed in self, and utterly losing sight of his true end and aim." Yet even then her noble heart, so free from vulgar ambitions, fully accepted the idea of storms to come, and even invoked them, — possibly as occasions for the display of her own fortitude. Bancal, when describing to her his ascent of the Puy-de-Dôme, had compared the thunders and tempests encountered at a certain elevation to those which beset the painful upward path of the friends of freedom. "That glorious mountain summit of yours," replies Mme. Roland, "is the image of the one which all great souls are struggling to gain amid political agitations and the tumult of passion." She had a presentiment that her own true level was a lofty one, and in her inmost heart she did not repudiate the idea of being one day forced to attain it. But when she confines herself to more practical opinions and a consideration of the details of government, the vagueness and insufficiency of her system become apparent. "She professes," she somewhere acknowledges, "two capital principles, — that security is the grave of liberty, and that leniency towards men in authority is the true method of forcing them into tyranny." Elsewhere she demands that the Assembly should provide first of all for the unlimited freedom of the press, which came fully to pass in 1790. In a letter addressed to Brissot, in December of the same year, she sums up her advice as follows: "Reports and reason, — nothing else can render the people happy." Yet this weakness and lack of positive political science are constantly relieved by political views remarkable for their justice and sagacity, and which show that she was under no delusion with regard to the real state of society. Speaking of a pamphlet by Lally Tolendal, she says of the men of his stamp, "They flatter the passions of the malcontents, they seduce the inconsiderate, they confuse weak minds. Take away from society these individuals and the ignorant class, whom, after a fashion, they control, and see how many men so found and enlightened minds will remain to stem the

torrent and preach the truth." But the ardour of the attack and something like the joy of battle, bear her swiftly on to a point where her anticipations become less flattering. Peril gives animation to her style, and causes her pen to sparkle. To Bose she writes, "People no longer dare to speak, say you? Well, then, let them thunder." A letter to Lanthenas of the 6th of March 1790, begins with the thrice-repeated cry, "War! war! war!" The burden of her song is always a reveillé. "Joy and Safety!" more often "Vigilance and Fraternity!"—the sentinel's cry upon the ramparts, as one may say, when he calls to the conflict at dawn. Even the expression "Morbleu" occurs, and does not seem out of place. A letter to Brissot on the 7th of January 1791, closes with these hurried words: "Yours, in haste. The wife of Cato must not amuse herself with paying compliments to Brutus."

Between the month of February, in which Mme. Roland came to Paris, and September, when she returned to Lyons, —during that half-year, so pregnant, so effervescent, which comprehended the flight of the king and the scenes at the Champ de Mars,—we behold her aggressive spirit becoming more and more conspicuous, and excited to the last degree by the whirlwind atmosphere in which she lived. The correspondence with Bancal is especially precious, in that it supplies us with the history of her tumultuous impressions during this sojourn. In the pages which she devotes to them in her Memoirs, her emotions, though still lively, are softened by distance and blended with judgments of a later date. Here we have a daily record of her thoughts and deeds. We see her despising the pleasures of the theatre and all mere gratifications of taste, but hurrying to the Assembly, to find it first weak, then corrupt; to regard it first with severity, afterwards with indignation and wrath. She sees plainly that 1789 and the impartialists have become the most dangerous enemies of the Revolution. Sieyès, Barnave, Thouret, and Rabaut, the most of those with whom she is soon to die, by no means escape being characterized as lax and perfidious; Pétion, Buzot, and Robespierre

alone satisfy her. But there is nothing of hers more telling and characteristic than an article which she penned during a sitting of the Assembly on the 20th or 28th of April. On the occasion of organizing the national guards, the distinction of active and passive citizens had been revived. Hence her rage and tears of blood. The article, which begins with these words — “Throw thy pen into the fire, generous Brutus, and betake thyself to the cultivation of lettuce” — closes with this military metaphor: “Adieu! we must beat to battle or retreat: there is no middle course.” And yet, with all her reckless and passionate transports, she preserves a clearness of reason far worthier than these of her great intelligence. Her estimate of Mirabeau is beautifully lucid and calm; and as regards events, she often appears to possess a foresight truly marvellous, being in no respect deceived about their tendency, while yet she will not waver or relent. Thus to Bancal she writes, “We are not yet called to die for liberty. There is more to be done. We must live to establish, to deserve, to defend it;” and elsewhere, “I know that good citizens, such as I see every day, regard the future with tranquil eyes; but, for all I hear them say, I am more than ever convinced that they are deluded;” and again, “I think the wisest are those who confess that it has become next to impossible to forecast future events.” In one place (page 233) she dwells with the utmost good sense upon patience, — a virtue too often neglected, and yet very necessary to the well-meaning if they would accomplish useful results; and then, with singular inconsistency, she herself fails in patience immediately afterwards. Regretting that the fugitive Louis XVI. had been arrested at Varennes, she assigns as a reason that but for this unlucky capture, civil war would have been inevitable, and the nation would have been forced into that grand school of public virtues. Exasperated by the events of the Champ de Mars, she “has come,” she says, “to applaud the utmost excesses of the Assembly, — nay, even to long for greater ones, — as the only means of arousing the public conscience.” Far dearer to me is this virgin soul,

long self-restrained and suddenly overmastered, when, yielding to the contemplation of infinite prospectives of hope for those descendants whom she will never see, she confesses, with tears and rapture, her unbounded faith in that religion of the future which commands the respect of those even who do not clearly distinguish the foundations on which it rests. Having been tearful witness to a triumph of Brissot's over the Jacobins, she exclaims, "At last I have seen the fire of freedom kindled in my land. It cannot be put out. Recent events have been as fuel to the flames. The lights of reason and the instincts of the heart unite to fan and feed it. I shall die when it may please nature, but my last breath will be an aspiration of joy and hope for coming generations."

The strictures of Mme. Roland on La Fayette are especially striking in the contrast which they offer to the unanimous reverence which he inspires in his patriotic old age. In her correspondence with Bancal, she repeatedly shows herself extremely unjust. In an unpublished letter to Brissot, dated July 31, 1792, and very important from an historical point of view, she becomes, it must be confessed, absolutely injurious and insulting; and so far forgets herself as to qualify the virtuous general by the very epithet which the angry Voltaire did not hesitate to bestow upon Rousseau. It is humiliating to think of the well-nigh irretrievable wrongs which political passions entail, and for which noble souls have afterwards to weep. A fortnight before her death, Mme. Roland repented—so to speak—of her old acrimony against La Fayette. In defending Brissot, who had been accused by Amar of complicity with the general, she uses the following words: "He shared a very common error with regard to La Fayette; or rather, it would seem that La Fayette, carried away in the first place by the principles which his intellect adopted, had not the force of character needful to defend them when the struggle became a hard one; or, possibly, terrified by the consequences of the overweening popular ascendancy, he judged it prudent to establish some sort of check." These various suppositions are

evidently the successive steps by which Mme. Roland came down, as we may say, from her original height of injustice ; but we see, by the precautions she takes, that when injustice has once been done (and, in general, how hastily done !), a lingering remnant of false shame renders it most painful to repair.

Returning to Paris towards the close of the year 1791, Mme. Roland may fairly be said in March 1792 to have entered the ministry with her husband. After the expiration of that first term of office, Roland and his wife occupied sometimes a country seat at Champigny-sur-Marne, and sometimes a lodging at No. 81 Rue de la Harpe. During the months which preceded the 10th of August, the political activity of our heroine was unremitting ; but her experience had borne fruit. She ceased to urge on the movement, such as it was, and even strove to retard it. After mingling freely with the influential men and party leaders, she had soon fathomed their characters with all a woman's subtilty, and classified them with a masculine vigour of intellect. Petty differences between her husband and Brissot or Clavières had shown her the difficulty of combined and uniform progress on the part even of the best of men. As the imminent crisis of the 10th of August drew near, she no longer called, as after Varennes, for stern and decisive measures : she desired the sections to unite, and demand, not forfeiture,* which, "if pronounced, would render the constitutional enactment well-nigh void," but provisory suspension, "which," she wrote to Brissot on the last of July, "might possibly, although with difficulty, be made to grapple some article of the Constitution." A letter from Louvet to Brissot, a week only before the 10th of August, is in the same strain, and expresses the same fear of weakness on the one side and excess on the other. Mme. Roland, like Louvet, complained of the silence of the Assembly, and of the dubious attitude of their friend, in these so threatening circumstances. The judgment pronounced by Mme. Roland on the politicians of the second revolutionary period, on

* Of the royal office on the part of Louis XVI.

those whom she had personally known and proved, is as distinct and decisive as her contempt of the men of 1789 may have seemed vague and blind. The reason is that, after 1790, she had a near view of the scene, and possessed all the facts of the situation, and the elements of the conduct there displayed. Her Memoirs contain brilliant and truthful portraits of her friends, a little in the style of Plutarch; but it is far more curious to study their likenesses as here taken,—in action and under the fire of battle, confidentially and not officially, in private and not for posterity. The letter to Brissot of July 31, 1792, which has been already cited, was designed to caution him on the score of his too easy temper and lenient judgments, and furnishes very minute information about that illustrious and fraternal group who seem, at this distance, to stand irradiated by a common halo. They defile before us, each with his proper physiognomy, and every individual is briefly characterized. First we have the worthy Sers, afterwards senator, the amiable philosopher, used to moderate pleasures, but slow and timid, and therefore incompetent in a revolution: then Gensonné, so weak with regard to Dumouriez in the affair of Bonne Carrère; who does not know how to sacrifice a man at the right moment; with too many images in his brain, and not enough resolution in his character: then the estimable Guadet, who, on the other hand, is too hasty, too ready with his wrath or contempt; and who was, moreover, deceived about the capacity of Duranthon, whom he urged into action, and has for ever compromised his judgment by this inexcusable blunder: finally, Vergniaud, whom she does not greatly love; whom we feel to have been too epicurean, too languid and voluptuous, for this woman with the soul of Cornelia; she will not, she says, allow herself to pass judgment upon him; but evidently it is not as easy for her as for us to regard the unexpected temporisings of the impulsive and high-flown orator as merely the reckless caprices of genius. She thinks him far too vain in his toilet, and distrusts, we know not wherefore, those downcast eyes, which yet would so lighten under the magic power of speech!

In her final portrait of Vergniaud, although she makes amends for the injustice of her first fleeting impression, we see plainly how slight was the sympathy between them. Friend Clavières seems to her in the retrospect more trustworthy, and, when not crotchety, absolutely loveable. "What would you have?" said Mme. de Staël, when some one reproached her with showing up her friends too freely; "if I were on my way to the scaffold, I could not help judging the friends who accompanied me." So it was with Mme. Roland. Among all these excellent and worthy men she sought in vain for a great character, able, in this crisis, to reassure and rally by his counsels the party of right. Oh, in those days how she must have mourned for the honest and disinterested Mirabeau! Even while she adjures Brissot to assume the command, we can see that she trusts him little, knowing him to be excessively hopeful, and of a pliant and even guileless nature. Could she herself, had she been a man, have become the good genius of patriotism, the saviour of the land? We love to think so; and there is nothing in her conduct at this time which belies the presence in her of a clairvoyant daring, a vast and most apposite ability.

But, confining ourselves to her estimate of others,—since, by reason of her sex, she was hampered and inadequate in action,—we are struck by the soundness of her judgment, and the keenness of her insight, even when clouded by passion. Her invectives against Garat, for instance, are extremely severe, and allow no glimpse of the subordinate qualities of that man of talent and even sensibility, who was amiable and fluent, and as good and sincere as one may be who is only a brilliant sophist, and untempered by virtue. And yet, after a reperusal of Garat's own apology in his Memoirs, I find that, despite all the author's denials, and his elegant, ingenuous, analytical explications, Mme. Roland's unfavourable judgment remains unrefuted and substantially sound. As we read the subtle specifications, the Ciceronian periods, of him who dared stigmatize neither Clodius nor Catiline, we can readily imagine Mme. Roland's indignation against this soft

language of palliation, in presence of what she calls crime ; against the conciliatory pretensions of that supple intelligence so entirely subservient to a vibratory imagination. Mme. Roland foresaw that this explanation would be made ; and she demolished it in advance when she wrote to Garat from her prison, " Betake yourself to fine writing ; account on philosophical principles for events, and their attendant errors and passions : posterity will still say of you, " He strengthened the hands of the party that brought popular representation into contempt." As for Brissot, we adopt in full Mme. Roland's estimate of him ; her testimony to his thorough honesty and disinterestedness. We make this statement because it has been sad and sickening for us to see the learned, conscientious, but system-ridden authors of a history of the Revolution, otherwise worthy of credit, reproducing as unanswerable certain odious imputations upon the probity of the Girondist leader. It is not easy, at the end of fifty years, to defend Brissot against the calumnies of Morande ; but his whole public career is a denial and refutation of the charges adduced against his previous obscure life. I was born in the region where Brissot first resided, at Boulogne, where he worked with Swinton, and where he married ; I am related to persons who extended to him a welcome at that time ; to that Cavilliers family where he was so intimate during his calumniated years ; and I have never heard expressed the slightest doubt of his unswerving integrity and virtuous poverty. If we were to have a full biography of Brissot, in the style of a recent essay, would it serve, I wonder, as prelude to a theory of the sacrifice of a corrupt and Protestant Gironde to a Catholic and incorruptible Robespierre ? So be it ! All I can say is, that the latter would smile his ugliest smile, could he read the biography of his victim, thus prematurely arrayed in blemished fillets.

In the correspondence with Bancal, frequent mention is made of Blot and Lanthenas, both of whom were soon alienated by differences of opinion from their illustrious friends. Lanthenas, to whom Mme. Roland alludes in her

Memoirs as a slightly exacting swain, and whom she characterizes in her letters as a saint, was so in fact, in the full and least flattering sense of the term. A well-meaning, impressible, excitable man, one of those on whom the revolution seized at the very outset, and whom it tossed aloft like *cerfs volants*,* extremely useful in the household up to that time,—the very ideal of a *famulus*,—he afterwards undertook to think and act for himself, and lost his head in the *mêlée*. Perhaps I ought rather to say that he lost his mind; for Marat, his former fellow-student in medicine, who had taken his measure without malice, inflicted a crowning injury by causing his name to be erased from the fatal list, as of “weak mind.” † We foresee this grievous destiny of Lanthenas from the moment when we find him addressing Brissot in articles with such silly titles as, “When the people is ripe for liberty, the nation is always worthy to be free;” and especially when he proposes to Bancal to “form a mighty league which shall work simultaneously in France and England, and rid us entirely of the priests in the course of a few years.” And still, by the qualities of his heart, and his old love for Mme. Roland, the good Lanthenas deserved a better fate.

The correspondence with Bancal stops at the second ministry of Roland; interrupted, as it were, by a double cry of heroic alarm at the approach of the Prussians, and of horror and execration at the September massacres. After these days, Mme. Roland and her friends organized openly and boldly for resistance. What change of theory was then wrought in the mind of the Girondists? They had no time for reflection, no opportunity to reconsider and rearrange their ideas of government and the constitution. Divided among themselves even about the most imperative measures, trembling and paralyzed before those other in-

* Kites, a child's toy made of paper, somewhat in the form of a shuttlecock, attached by a string to the hand of the player, and floating when tossed into the air.—Tr.

† He said before the whole Convention, that, “as for Dr. Lanthenas, everybody knew that his mind was weak.”

flexible theories which were being thrust in their faces like keen and steady swords, their resistance was wholly a matter of instinct, humanity, and heart. Into what would their political views have ripened, if they themselves had not perished? To judge by their survivors, — Louvet, Laujuinais, and those of the seventy-one who respected their memory, — they would have remained faithful to a thorough, generous, republican form of freedom; to the freedom of the year 3, even though it had still proved unequal to the conflict with intrigue and passion. They would have fallen back upon the principles of 1789 for a basis; their antipathy against the men of that epoch would have died away; or, at least, a feeling of respect would for ever have silenced the war of abusive words. The noble André Chénier would not have vilified the pure intentions of Brissot. Mme. Roland could not have failed to give her hand to La Fayette. All the leading minds, from M. Necker to Louvet, however hasty and headstrong they may have seemed, were still upon the same side of the stream, and acknowledged the same social laws. They found space among themselves for disputes about the extent of authority, and differences concerning the limits of freedom; but a radical incompatibility of principles, as well as of manners and temperament, — the abyss which, on the 2nd of September, opened under the very feet of the Gironde, — separated them from the bloodthirsty extremists and their savage system. From the moment when fanaticism no longer recoils from slaughter as a method, social life is at an end. The bounds of human morality are overpassed; the restrictions which civilization imposes upon nature are violated. The fundamental guaranty of man's right to live and communicate with and differ from his kind is swept away.

I must crave pardon for insisting so strongly upon the fact of this abyss, this Rubicon, — narrow, indeed, but fathomless, — which divided the foremost of the Girondists from their Jacobin foes. The demarcation is historically essential. If there be (which God forbid!) any similarity between the situation of to-day and that which we describe,

any chance for reorganizing parties analogous to those, it becomes especially needful to make the statement, and to guard against all confusion. However candid the original Girondists may have been, in so long failing to perceive the radical point of difference between themselves and their future enemies, the Girondists of our day, enlightened by experience, would be very unfair if they pretended not to see it.

We gather from the correspondence with Bancal minute information concerning the sentiments of Mme. Roland, and such as strengthens our sense of the depth and simplicity of her character. Mindful of individual attachments, she awards them a large and fair space; and, so far from sacrificing them, in an ultra-Spartan fashion, on the altar of her country, she cultivates them with pious care. She loves to associate with the names of friends those public sympathies which engross and carry her away; "for thus," she says in her musical style, whose finished turns of expression recall the conversation of Mme. de Woluar, "we add to the mighty interest inspired by a glorious history the affecting interest peculiar to a private sentiment, and with the patriotism which elevates, and, as it were, generalizes, the affections, there mingles the charm of friendship, which adorns and perfects them."

The letters of the 24th and 26th of January 1791, addressed to Bancal, who was then in London, and in which she tries to console him for his father's death, deserve a place beside the most sublime and eloquent effusions of a brave yet tender philosophy. Cicero and Seneca offered more commonplace comfort, and suggested considerations more remote and less moving to the heart. Marcus Aurelius would have been more stoical, and could not thus have entered into sorrow; but if the son-in-law of Agricola had had to speak to a friend of the death of a father, I can fancy that he would have approached him with words such as these,—manly and yet compassionate, temperate as befits a solemn reality.

The superficial reader of this correspondence may possibly

miss some of its most interesting features. The truth is, that during these years there was a kind of romance in progress, accompanied by more or less of complication, between Mme. Roland and Bancal—yes, a veritable heart history, whose half-hidden traces we now and then discern beneath the proprieties of language and the absorbing interest of great events. Bancal, from the very commencement of their intercourse, seems to have been deeply fascinated. We gather from Mme. Roland's gentle raillery that he maintained that their mutual attraction was not due solely to the Revolution, that it would have occurred all the same had there been no special call for patriotism, and that they were predestined to a reciprocal attachment. There are secret ties. There are sympathies. During a sojourn at the close of La Platière, some time in September 1790, Bancal became doubly captivated, and the two having fallen on a certain day into confidential converse, he found it impossible to hide from his friend the disquiet that she caused him. Leaving soon after, he wrote a letter to M. and Mme. Roland, jointly; but the latter, to whom it was forwarded by her absent husband (he was then at Lyons or Villefranche), seized upon certain expressions which she interpreted in a very special manner, and ventured, in the absence and without the knowledge of M. Roland, to write from the country, on the 8th of October, a letter which, with no further comment, we leave to the sensibility of the reader. But the emotion which this letter betrays was the index of sentiment merely, not of a passion. In another—a kind of aside—dated October 28, Mme. Roland reverts to the subject, and endeavours to calm the imagination of her friend and restore him to reason. Elsewhere she quotes the fable of the nightingale and the linnet, complaining, pleasantly enough and with a kind of veiled coquetry, of the inevitable forgetfulness of the traveller, who really seems to have neglected his friends. We find, too, in her letters of condolence, certain promises of fidelity to tender memories they have in common; then, after his return to London, the expression of a fond anxiety at witnessing his

protracted sadness. But all is ended by the avowal of a new passion on the part of Bancal, on which occasion Mme. Roland, like a discreet and generous friend, lavishes upon him her counsels and delicate offers of intervention. This could not have been the genuine, serious, long-delayed sentiment which at length seized the strong soul of Mme. Roland, and to which she twice alludes in her Memoirs. First, when she speaks of the excellent reasons which hastened her departure for the country somewhere about the 31st of May; and again when hailing the empire of philosophy, which had succeeded to that of religious feeling within her, she adds that these continuous defences ought, it would seem, for ever to protect her from the onslaught of passion, from which, nevertheless, though she strive with the energy of an athlete, she can scarcely defend her mature years! Who, then, was the object of that late, unique, heart-rending passion? A prejudiced public has named Barbaroux, because, in a noble sketch of him, she praises that "head of Antinoüs;" but there is no proof that it was he. A sacred veil will continue to hide this latest storm, which gathered and passed in silence over her mighty spirit when death was near.

In a letter found among Brissot's papers, but not addressed to him,—for at that date (November 22, 1789), there was no such connection between them as is here indicated,—Mme. Roland has once mentioned Mme. de Staël. "Stories are told here" (at Lyons), says Mme. Roland, "of Mme. de Staël, who is said to be very constant at the Assembly, and who, they pretend, has cavaliers there to whom she sends billets from the gallery, urging them to support the patriotic measures. They say, too, that the Spanish ambassador has reproved her severely at her father's table. You cannot conceive the importance attached by our aristocrats to this nonsense, which perhaps originated in their own brains. They would willingly represent the Assembly as governed by a few blind fanatics urged on by a handful of women." Mme. de Staël, on the other hand, has nowhere, that I remember, mentioned Mme. Roland. Was this the instinct

of filial vengeance on behalf of her misconceived and vilified father? or was it the weakness of a woman who averts her eye from a rival? In that chapter of the *Considerations* which treats of the Girondist group, Mme. Roland is conspicuous by her absence. Yet it is impossible to help comparing and contrasting, in imagination, these two illustrious women. Mme. Roland, who was eleven years the elder, owed to her bourgeois education the advantage of original and entire freedom from the vanity, the artificiality, and the tinsel of society. Her little recess in the drawing-room near her father's studio was worth more, as a juvenile asylum, than the arm-chair in M. Necker's salon, surrounded by a circle of wits, or even than the romantic shades of Saint-Ouen. Mlle. Philipon, therefore, became the more masculine and simple character of the two. She early formed the habit of repressing sensibility and imagination, of pausing at the dictates of reason, and regulating her conduct thereby. We do not find her, at fifteen, completely enamoured of any but M. de Guibert; and M. de Boismorel, who seems to play a part in her life analogous to his, is a perfectly quiet and commonplace figure in her eyes. The philosophic and rationalistic tinge which she assumes, and to some extent affects, makes her eye a little antipathetic and unjust towards the reigning wits and literati of the day, so dear to the heart of Mlle. Necker. Her feeling is the very opposite of infatuation. She loses none of their absurdities. She finds the bearing of d'Alembert insignificant, the pronounciation of Abbé Delille unpleasant; Ducis and Thomas seem to her to extol one another like the two asses in the fable, and she is quite ready to see an ordinary man of letters in him of whom Mme. de Staël has said, with such consummate tact, "Garat was then minister of justice, and in happier times he had been one of the best writers in France." Yet let no one think to represent Mme. Roland as a mere stoical philosopher, a strict citizen like her husband,—in a word, as anything but a woman. A woman she is. We recognise her as such amid all her philosophy and her wisdom, by her

need of acting, if not openly, of touching the springs, although she never boasted of so doing. With what smiling satisfaction she describes herself as seated at her little table in the cabinet which Marat called her boudoir, and writing, under cover of the minister, her famous letter to the pope. More than once, during M. Roland's second ministry, was she summoned before the bar of the Convention; and she came and answered all questions, modestly but fully, in language singularly apt and clear. Beneath this modest air men read her radiant enjoyment of this active participation in political affairs. On her return to Villefranche, after her six months at Paris, in 1791, when about to re-enter private life,—never having dreamed of the ministry for her husband,—how she suffers under the stifling obscurity and nullity of the province! How her heart dies within her! She, too, felt that she was formed for an active, influential, manifold part,—for that main stage of action where, at every step, the intellect finds food and the love of glory is stimulated. She, too, far from Paris, exiled from the large and lofty existence whose joys she had tasted, would have begged, but gently, for her Rue de la Harpe. And if any prophetic vision could then have revealed her public career, so brief, so crowded; her messages to the pope and the king from the depths of her austere boudoir; her ever-applauded appearance before the bar of the Assembly; and, for the last scene of the drama, herself, white-robed and with floating hair, mounting the scaffold in triumph,—if she could have had her choice, surely she would never have wavered. Like Achilles of old, she would have preferred the fate of the warrior, early stricken and immortal, to any obscure fireside happiness. And yet she appreciated domestic life, the mother's vocation, managed the affairs of her household in all simplicity, and could hearken to Nature in her secret solitudes. Outdoor details,—the colouring of vines and nut-trees, the toil of the vine-dresser, the harvest, the poultry-yard, the store of gathered fruit, the dried pears,—she was passionately fond of all these things, and busied herself with them. In

a letter to Bosc—rich, beautiful, and, as it were, fertile in its rusticity—she exclaims, “I am assifying per force,”* which would not have sounded well beneath the majestic shades of Coppet.† George Sand, in her best days, might so have written from Berri. To complete the picture of Mme. Roland’s domestic qualities, we need but recall the opening of that other letter which she wrote to Bosc from Villefranche. “Seated by the fire at eleven A.M., after a peaceful night and the performance of my various morning duties, my friend at his desk, my little girl knitting, and I talking with the one and superintending the work of the other, happy in the tender affection of my dear little family, and writing to a friend while the snow falls without,” etc. Along with these antique fashions, this wholesome and kindly bourgeois life, we may venture to note its drawbacks. In default of aristocratic punctilio, is not the plebeian and philosophic boastfulness rather annoying? When Mme. Roland alludes, with a superior smile, to the disciples of Jesus, her strong-minded accent shocks me. When, in imitation of Jean Jacques, she commits to paper certain details which it becomes every woman to reserve, she seems to enjoy, with a kind of fine stoical humour and contempt of sexual distinctions, allusions unworthy of one who was chastity itself. Her virtuous levity allows her, in another similar case, to find the romances of Louvet‡ merely pretty and tasteful. These whims of philosophism could not, however, spoil her air of perfect womanliness, nor that consummate grace which the friction of the Revolution never tarnished. No heed should be paid, on this head, to the insinuations of Mme. de Créquy, who has given us a

* *Saturæ sordida rura casæ*, says Martial. “I am assifying perforce, and immersed in the petty cares of this piggish country life.” (Letter of October 12, 1785.) She uses this word assify because she was then drinking asses’ milk.

† Mme. de Staël used to say that she should like agriculture well enough if agriculture smelled less strongly of manure.

‡ *Les Aventures du Chevalier de Faublas* and *Emilie de Varlmont*—scandalous tales, in which the author professed to lay bare the corruptions of his time, particularly in the higher ranks of society.—Tr.

picture of Mme. Roland in her youth, which is in other respects charming.

The style and language of Mme. Roland are clearer, more vigorous, and more concise than Mme. de Staël's, in her earlier manner,—a difference traceable to the character and mental habits of the two writers, and to Mme. Roland's ten years of seniority. In her solitary leisure, she had already written much, and on all sorts of subjects. She came before the public ripe and ready. The pages which she threw off in haste attest a thorough and practised pen,—a mind capable of comprehending and describing a multitude of relations. Mme. de Staël, arraigned before the same Assembly, would probably have spoken with less calmness and self-possession. She would have been inclined to display, and easily overcome. The one, like a Roman matron controlling her shyness and pride, would have hidden under the folds of her robe her stylus and tablets. Delphine might have trembled and felt her heart swell, but, like a Norse woman, she would not have feared to loosen her girdle and bring forth her harp. And yet Mme. Roland is very much under the spell of the same sentimental inspiration as that other daughter of Jean Jacques. "Whatever be the fruits of observation and the rules of philosophy," she cries to Bancal, "I believe in a surer guide for healthful souls, and that is feeling." Like Mme. de Staël, again, she reads Thomson with tears; and if, later in her republican vein, she devotes herself to Tacitus, and desires no other reading, was not the republican author of the work on literature also fed on Sallust and the letters of Brutus? The narratives of both show the utmost vivacity of mind, and they regard with a kind of transport of contempt the base calumniators around them. They can employ, whenever occasion demands, that play of irony so natural to superior women. In the course of years I think they would have assimilated still more. The former would have learned more of the world, and would have abated her stoicism in presence of the actual. The powers of the latter would have ripened, and her illusions would have

passed away.* A tribute which can rarely be paid to great and glorious beings, but which Mme. Roland especially deserves, is this,—the deeper you search into her life and letters, the more simple the whole appears. Always the same language, the same frank thoughts,—not a secret, not a complication, — whether of passion or of contending inclinations and desires. Even that last mysterious love—whose object is unknown, whose existence is but twice confessed—is majestic in its silence. For the rest, all is true, obvious, perfectly limpid,—not a stain, nor a veil to be raised. Peer as closely as you will into her house of glass,—transparent as ever the old Roman desired,—the light of reason and innocence irradiates its well-ordered and refined interior. How this woman bears scrutiny from the standpoint of the actual! Close upon death she could exclaim, without any affectation, in her parting hymn, “Farewell, my child, my husband, my maid, my friends all! Farewell, sun, whose beams bring peace to my soul, while recalling it to the skies. Farewell, lonesome fields, the sight of which has so often moved me, and you, rustic inhabitants of Thézée, who were wont to bless me when I came, whose sweat I have wiped away, whose misery I have soothed, whose sickness I have tended. Farewell, farewell, peaceful alcoves, where my spirit was fed on truth, my imagination captivated by study, and where I learned in

* The name of Mme. Roland has sometimes been compared with that of Mistress Hutchinson, a woman of equal powers, and the author of *Memoirs* which, though somewhat monotonous and not very amusing, are solid and healthful reading. Mistress Hutchinson descants too much, during a whole volume or more, on the entanglements of her husband, the governor of Nottingham, with the local committees, and is not sufficiently explicit about his conduct in Parliament during the affair of the king and afterwards; but the beginning and the end are perfect, and sensibly impregnated, or rather kneaded, with veracity. It is touching to see the love and respect of Mistress Hutchinson for her noble husband, and how modestly she attributes all her own virtues to him. “While he was here he was her life! Now she is but the faded image of her former self.” But Mistress Hutchinson and Mme. Roland differ as widely as the two Revolutions that produced them.

the silence of meditation to rule my senses and to despise vanity."

There has been an attempt of late to make Mme. Roland the type of the woman of the future, a brave republican wife, inspiring her husband, equal or superior to him; substituting, as it is said, for Christian meekness and virginal timidity a noble and clairvoyant daring. But this is an ambitious and delusive chimera. Women like Mme. Roland will always make themselves a place, but they will always be exceptional. A more wholesome and temperate system of education than now prevails, marriages more accordant with the real fitness of things, will doubtless,—at least we hope so,—tend to make the relation of man and wife one of the intellect as well as of the other faculties. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to transmute the old virtues, or even the old graces. There is the more need to preserve them. We would remind those who adduce Mme. Roland as an example, that she did not, ordinarily, neglect those graceful amenities which constitute her empire in common with the rest of her sex, while the keen, irrepressible, and, at times, self-asserting genius which belonged to her alone, cannot, unless by some strange hallucination, be deemed authority for others.

II.*

It may seem that enough, and more than enough, has been said on the subject of Mme. Roland. We ourselves discussed her some time since, and now occasion offers, and we renew the theme. In criticism as well as in life there is a certain fidelity to one's old attachments, which is a pleasure and a profit, as well as a duty. We expand too much nowadays in writing as well as in living. We are all critics, and we try our hand at everything. Within and without we are all like commonplace drawing-rooms; but it is well not quite to forget the old favourite nooks.

* This second article was called forth by the publication of some further inedited letters of Mme. Roland by Coquebert in 1840.

True, the world does not think so ; and inveterate habits displease the public. When it has had enough of an author or a personage, however excellent, it wants no more. "We know all that," it says ; "pass on to something else." And so I should not be surprised, if, despite the intrinsic interest of the correspondence just published, certain readers should find it monotonous and tiresome. Those, on the other hand, who believe that a soul is a microcosm, and that an eminent character can never be too minutely studied,—those in whose estimate of Mme. Roland there mingles the worship of a fond affection,—will find in it a thousand fresh reasons for their sympathy, and will discover a multitude of particulars as reliable as they are interesting.

When about eleven years of age, Mlle. Phlipon was placed in the convent of the Dames de la Congregation, Rue Neuve Saint Etienne, to receive her first communion. There she became acquainted with two young girls from Amiens, sisters, a little older than herself,—Mlles. Henriette and Sophie Cannet,—and grew very fond of them—of Sophie especially. When she left the convent, and went back to her father in the Quai de Lunettes, she opened an active and constant correspondence with Sophie, who herself had returned to Amiens. It is this correspondence, preserved as a great treasure in the family of the ladies Cannet, which M. Auguste Breuil, an advocate, has recently obtained for publication from the hands of their worthy heirs.

It comprises and fills, almost without interruption, the interval between January 1772 and January 1780. At its commencement, the young girl was not quite eighteen ; when the last letter was written, she was almost twenty-six. There were others, doubtless, that had no regular connection with the rest, and have not been preserved. The final letter mentions the writer's approaching marriage with M. Roland, the earliest announcement of which was due to the Amiens friends. A four years' residence in that place interrupted the correspondence ; at least it could no longer continue on the same footing as before. The letters end, like any romance, with a wedding ; and a romance indeed they are,—

a romance of early years, and of the friendship of two young girls, school friends, just entering upon life.

Sophie is the more cool, calm, and happy of the two. Manon Phlipon is what might be supposed,—just what she so clearly describes herself in her Memoirs. But here the progressive development appears in every letter,—rich, artless, continuous. We behold her soul, her talents, her reasoning powers, slowly taking shape, and struggling towards the light. The letters of Mme. Roland to her young friends furnish proof to my mind of the truth of this idea. If the perfect moral creature is ever to be formed within us, it is formed early. It exists at twenty in all its integrity and all its grace. Then, if at all, we bear within us our Plutarchian hero, our Alexander. Subsequently we come too often to survive our hero. In proportion as he develops and is displayed before the eyes of others, he actually loses. When the world begins to appreciate him, he is already deteriorating. Sometimes (horrible thought!) he has already ceased to be. Frankness, self-sacrifice, fidelity, courage,—these keep their old names, but scarcely deserve them. Each soul in its progress incurs all the stains, undergoes all the waste, of which it is capable. “All men,” says the noble and charitable Vauvenargues, “are born truthful, and die deceitful.” It might have sufficed him for the expression of his bitter thought to say, “they die undeceived.” At all events, even with the best of us, the result of what is called progress in life is very inferior to the pristine ideal realized in some moment of our youth. We are fortunate, therefore, whenever we can discover original likenesses of those who are foreordained to fame; when some unforeseen chance reveals them to us exactly as they were at the chosen and unique moment, at their blossoming, “their hour of beauty,” as the Greeks used to say. In all the rest of our view of them there must be more or less of anachronism.

Mme. Roland certainly appeared greater at a later day; but was she ever wiser, more profound, more loveable, than in these youthful hours of intimate outpouring? When the

public declared in her favour, by how many scenes was her triumph purchased ! The fourth act of the drama noticeably dragged, and was greatly injured by bombast. The fifth happily repaired all deficiencies, and the halo of the scaffold hides the errors of ambition. But at present our only concern is to give a simple, tender, faithful portraiture of her humble first attempts.

Mme. Roland might have lived on to the end in the sphere which fate at first ordained her, and not have seemed greatly out of place. Her friends, while regretting her narrow circumstances, would never have dreamed of transporting her to that stormy region where she breathed so freely and died so victoriously. And yet she was the same then as afterwards ; only her consummate moral nature could rule itself so well that she did not seem under constraint. The interest we feel in obscure lives depends on our power of divining and tracing out the character and genius which are destined one day to illuminate the world, but which might just as easily have remained hid. "How many a Hampden," says Gray in his "Country Churchyard," "sleeps unknown beneath the sod !" I have sometimes tried to imagine what Cardinal Richelieu would have been if fate had restricted him to private life. What a disagreeable neighbour ; or, to speak vulgarly, what a bad bed-fellow ! Bonaparte, just before 1795, suggests a similar idea,—when he is without employment, endeavouring to quench with a few whiffs Bourrienne or Mme. Permon. How rare are the beings who are both good and excellent in private life, and great in public life, like Washington and Mme. Roland !

One precaution is needful in approaching these letters. To avoid misunderstanding, we should call to mind something of the habits and aims of the young girl who penned them. In some respects, and in very many of their pages, they are like recitations in rhetoric and philosophy to which we seem to be listening. The young Phlipon, in her hunger for knowledge, and with the instinct of genius, read all sorts of authors, kept a list of them, made extracts, and discussed them elaborately with her friends ; "for," as she

very sensibly says, "we learn nothing when we only read. We must extract and convert, so to speak, into our own substance the things we would preserve, until we become penetrated with their essence." Rare and vigorous mind, to which everything came naturally, even the education which she gave herself! She alludes in her Memoirs to what she used very properly to call her extracts, her maiden productions, of which these letters are the complement. Now it is a treatise on metaphysics that she analyzes; now Delolme in twelve pages (which is rather too much); now she attempts a prose elegy. There are flourishes in her style. Circumlocutions accounted elegant, and dictionary epithets like the "bells of folly," the "docile pupil of the indolent Epicurean," and the "playful children of laughter," abound at intervals. "You know," she one day writes to her friend, "that my home is on the banks of the Seine, near the extremity of that island where may be seen the statue of the best of kings. The river flows peacefully on the right, bearing past my dwelling its wholesome waves." No doubt this is a musical beginning for a description of the corner of the Quai des Lunettes; but we regret that the editor had not considerably condensed this elementary portion, which has no interest save as a sample. It would have enhanced the charm of many of those incidental sketches that are so fresh and free. In the third letter from the preceding, she alludes very prettily to the prosy life she is leading at Vincennes with her uncle the canon, in the midst of the choristers. "The moment the good canon smites the old bass-viol with his quivering bow, I begin to scrape a violin; a second canon accompanies us on a squeaking flute, and a concert ensues fit to terrify the cats. This fine performance over, the gentlemen congratulate themselves and compliment one another, while I escape to the garden to gather roses and parsley, or take a turn in the poultry-yard, where the brooding hens are a subject of interest, and the young chickens divert me. Then I turn over in my mind all the novels and histories I have ever read, to revive my torpid imagination, and divert my thoughts from the conversation

of the chapter, which sometimes puts me to sleep. This is my life." And a little farther on : " I like this tranquillity, broken only by the crowing of the cocks. I seem to realize my being ; I have a sense of comfort, like that of a tree taken out of a box and transplanted into an open field." Here we have a very different style ; or rather, there is no longer any question of style. The pupil has finished her recitation in rhetoric, and is talking with us.

Nevertheless, it must be owned that the publication in full of these letters does not seem entirely to have violated the intention of their maiden author. In more than one instance she is clearly thinking of the use which may be made of her words. We detect a tip of the author's ear. If, unhappily, a letter miscarries, there are infinite research and regret. Is she quite serious when she speaks of her " scribblings " ? " And then what matters it how we write ? When I compose my letters " (she does compose them, then), " do I expect that they will find an editor when I am gone, and take rank with those of Mme. de Sévigné ? I am not so foolish. If we preserve our scribblings, it is that we may laugh over them when we are toothless." And yet, amid the most confidential and tender confessions of a heart which believes itself won, we find the following : " Open the letter—read it—think of my tortures and of his, and consider whether you ought to send it. But on no account burn anything. Were my letters one day to be read by all the world, I would not shroud in obscurity the sole monument of my weakness and my love." Well, then, since we are allowed, and even invited, let us penetrate into the interior of this virginal heart, to which she has been pleased to afford us a clue.

The unity of this correspondence, the effect of which would have been heightened by a little repression, lies in the friendship of two young girls,—in that friendship, impassioned at the outset, at least on the part of Mlle. Phlipon, and which, on being transferred from the convent, with its petty storms, its everyday interests, its ups and downs, runs its course in a few years, and expires with marriage. When I say expires, however, I speak only of

its intense and ardent form. The substance always remained. Even before the passion of her friendship was over we find it suffering a check, and it undergoes a perfectly sensible modification towards the close of the first volume, the moment the earliest sentiment of love effects a lodgment in her hitherto undivided heart. But we must condense, as much as possible, the story of these early years, and proceed lightly and rapidly. Mlle. Phlipon, at eighteen, had long been formed, and was already a devotee. The letters of 1772, to Sophie, are so serious as to provoke a smile. We feel that the young writer is fresh from Nicole, and that she has not yet read Rousseau. "She was prevented," she says ("prevented by grace"—this is Nicole's style), "a little later than her friend." Up to the age of eleven she lived by a species of reason, though still folded in the shades of infancy. Not until then did the divine ray first shine. Nevertheless, vanity, that mighty and detestable enemy, is not overcome. "I call it detestable, and I detest it, too, and with good reason, for it plays me many an ugly trick. 'Tis a cunning thief that always manages to snatch something. Let us unite our forces, my dear friend, and make war upon it. I swear it an implacable hostility. Let us track it in all its windings," etc. There follows a complete little harangue, in which she preaches a holy crusade against the abominable *m. Saint François de Sales*, who has the air of allowing a few gewgaws to girls in view of an honourable marriage, strikes her as too indulgent. She enumerates and confesses, in excellent didactic style, her own thorny conflicts in the matter of vanity. "Here, my friend, you have a faithful picture of the revolutions whereof my heart was the theatre." This semi-Jansenist phase will not last long. We can trace in her correspondence the decline of this once so fervid devotion. In March 1776, she still repeats her stations, but cannot be resigned to the five Paters and the five Aves. In September of the same year, the Amiens friends are praying for her conversion. She has long been busy with what she calls her "freaks of reasoning." "I am interested in the idea of universality,

and the fair chimera (if it be a chimera) of utility allures and intoxicates me." She estimates her recent devotion philosophically, and accounts for it as follows: "Persons of tender heart and thoughtful mind always begin so." On the other hand, her ideal fondness for the pious and indulgent Sophie is in no degree impaired.

Austere, active, diligent, studious, passing from Plutarch to the Abbé Nollet, and from geometry to her household duties,* the youthful Phlipon, in her nineteenth year, did not always escape a certain dreamy melancholy, which she never thought to exorcise, and which it pleased her to confound with regret for her absent friend. If, on a Sunday in early May, after hearing the convent mass, she took a stroll with her mother in the Luxembourg, she fell into reverie. The silence and calm pervading the gardens, then rural and solitary, were broken for her only by the soft quivering of the agitated leaves. She longed for her Sophie during this delicious walk, and the succeeding letters are pervaded by a deeper tinge of sentiment,—a great word in those days, and one which indicates the prevailing hue of the last half of the eighteenth century. But native gaiety and the joy of strength and innocence soon corrected her languor, and restored her poise and calm. Even when repeating a rustic ode, after Thomson, and moralizing on the control of the passions, she added, with beautiful gravity, "I find in my religion the true path to happiness; when I am submissive to its precepts my life is auspicious. I sing of my God, my blessings, my friend. I praise them to my guitar. In short, I am happy." It was still early spring with her,—the first week of the heart's May.

A visit of Sophie to Paris and the small-pox cause an interruption in the correspondence. The small-pox, before its ravages were checked, used commonly to come to young

* And also to the family calling. Her father was an artist and engraver. She sometimes laboured to become one. Her drawings are perfection. M. Courtois (son of the member of the Convention) has a very fine drawing of hers, the lines of which show a great deal of power, and also some engraved stones, particularly a coral, after the antique, representing a shepherd wrestling with a goat.

girls as a symptom of their entrance into the age of emotion. To the physical constitution it was a terrible judgment of nature, putting every charm to the test. Mlle. Phlipon arose from it with a beauty that, henceforth, had nothing to fear, and had scarcely recovered from her long convalescence when emulous admirers began to present themselves, whom she dazzled ever more and more. "From the moment," she says in her Memoirs, "when a girl attains her development, a swarm of suitors attends her footsteps, like the bees that buzz about an opening flower." But though she employs this graceful image, her tone is uniformly satirical, and she is very entertaining on the subject of this general uprising of her lovers, whom she causes to defile before us, and shows off with an air of vast enjoyment. She is like one of those heroines of Jean Jacques whom he was so fond of locating in the Pays de Vaud,—a Claire d'Orbe in her innocent raillery. She is less facetious in her letters than in her Memoirs, for her suitors come one at a time; and since there is more than one whose request may prove a serious matter, she appears occasionally quite pre-occupied. In her inmost heart they vex and irritate, as much as they will, subsequently, amuse her. "My sentiments strike me as very odd," she says. "What can be stranger than for me to hate any one because he loves me, and from the moment I try to love him? Yet so it is. I am giving you a faithful record of my experience." The letters to Sophie, in these moments of subtle confidence, become more rapid and animated. They suggest contending impulses and incentives. Mere friendship is but their occasion and pretext,—a wavering, agitated veil. Some undefined and bashful consciousness is working in the depths of her heart. "But I am not always capable of application. I have had recent experience of this. I snatched a pen and drew your portrait to divert my mind. I keep it carefully. I added by way of inscription, 'The portrait of Sophie.' When my head aches all I can do is to scribble! I write everything that occurs to me, and it clears my brain. Adieu! I am expecting a cousin to take me out walking.

My imagination dances—my pen runs wild—my senses are thrilled—my feet burn. Wholly thine."

However intrinsically calm and healthy one may be, it would seem difficult, in the rush of youthful thoughts and feelings, and amid so many moving sollicitations, to remain utterly cold. Accordingly the moment came when Mlle. Philipon gave forth a spark. Who, then, was the chosen one, the first mortal she ever met who crossed, though but for a moment, the still inviolate ideal of her noble heart?

Among her suitors there were men of all sorts and all professions, from the diamond merchant to the doctor and the academician, the grocer and the restaurant-keeper; and it must be owned, as the merry maiden herself said, that if this more or less amorous suite could have been represented in a picture, each with the attributes of his profession, like the stage Turks in a certain famous ceremony, the result would have been a singular medley. Yet she was not always jesting; and her one softened and serious moment, by no means very violent or stormy, but sufficiently tender, and somewhat embellished in description, the correspondence does actually indicate.

There is a great deal said, in her Memoirs, of La Blancherie, a sort of author and philosopher who early subsided into twaddle, and even into philanthropic brokerage. She passes a superficial judgment on him, and, after some sort of natural digression, she returns to the subject, saying lightly, "Let us settle the claims of this individual:" but before being settled by her, he had succeeded in making himself beloved; and better proof could not be furnished, if required, that there is nothing in love save what we put into it, and that the object of the flame counts in reality for almost nothing. This spirited and sensible girl, with an imagination singularly chaste and austere, distinguishes, from the very first, one who is a complete epitome of the follies and affectations of his day, and fancies she sees in him a realization of her most alluring dream. The fact is that La Blancherie, that young sage, the friend of Greuze, with his verses and his theories, and his moral advice to

parents, represented to perfection the commonplace philosophic or sentimental romanticism of his time, as it was in its glory. Romanticism, however, is very likely to succeed for once, and in some form or other, with the heart of a young girl, even were that young girl destined to become Mme. Roland. The letters to Sophie, therefore, are full of this grave crisis in her interior life. Postscripts, added without her mother's knowledge, multiply and extend. The little light closet where she writes no longer appears sufficiently secure from surprise. "No answer—none at least that would be intelligible to any beside myself. Adieu! my heart throbs at the slightest noise. I tremble like a thief." All is, her friend must believe herself, at such a time, more necessary, more beloved, more precious than ever. With what an agony of impatience her replies are awaited! If the wished-for letter arrive during the family dinner, there is no help for it,—it must be opened at once, before them all; and she forgets that she is not alone, and sheds tears; and then her parents smile, and grand-mamma speaks the word that is in all their minds. "If you had a husband and children, this friendship would soon vanish, and you would forget Mlle. Cannel." And then the young girl, who gives a ravishing account of this domestic scene, revolts, as one might suppose she would, at such an idea. "It surprises me to find that so many people regard friendship as a frivolous or chimerical sentiment. Almost every one seems to imagine that the lightest emotion of another sort is capable of changing and effacing friendships which they consider the mere makeshifts of an unoccupied heart. Do you believe, Sophie, that any change of circumstances would break the tie between us?" This word "break" is a hard one, certainly, but why is it, O maiden, that your friendship seems intensified in those moments when you have some peculiarly tender avowal to make? Why, after a second interview with him, whom you avoid naming, one day when he has caused you to read the proof-sheets of an instructive work which he has just completed, and you are perfectly transported by the discovery that the

author, if he is not Rousseau, has at least in him something of Greuze, why do you conclude your letter to your friend in such an impassioned strain: "Receive my tears of emotion and the hot kiss that has fallen upon these last lines"? Whence came that burning kiss which suddenly makes its first appearance here? Is not original friendship undergoing a change? And why, afterwards, when a new situation has been fully established,—when a marriage, not of passion, but of reason, is soon to end her dreams,—why is the last letter of the correspondence precisely the one in which this announcement is made? When grandmamma delivered her La Bruyère-like oracle, she went a little too far, perhaps; but was she not half right?

This sentiment for La Blancherie may not absolutely deserve the name of love, nor quite meet our idea of the prime passion of such a soul, but still it transcends the bounds of common interest. Mme. Roland, in her Memoirs, regarding it from a distance and in perspective, has doubtless to some extent curtailed its proportions. Here we have it displayed in greater amplitude. It was a conspicuous advantage to La Blancherie, at first, that he was not seen often, nor for long at a time. He was often at Orleans, and seldom came to the house after the death of Mme. Roland's mother: M. Phlipon, the father, had little fancy for him, and he was requested to abate his visits. These eclipses—this twilight atmosphere—enhanced his brilliancy. Our heroine, whom I have compared above to one of the characters in the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*," had become very like a certain enamoured lady in *Corneille*, when she thinks of her fond and virtuous absent one. When La Blancherie, whom she no longer had the opportunity to see frequently, is descried at church, on the occasion of a funeral service performed for her dear mother a year after her death, "You may imagine," she writes to her friend, "the emotion caused me by his presence at such a ceremony. I blushed for those criminal tears which flowed at once for my mother and my lover. Heavens! what a word! But need they have shamed me? No; reassured by the recti-

tude of my own feelings, I take thee to witness, dear and sacred shade!" We recognise the tone to which she has risen; it is like that in the sublime scene,—

"Adieu, trop malheureux et trop parfait amant!"*

Elsewhere, still after the manner of Pauline, she speaks of the surprise of her senses at the sight of La Blancherie; but the probability is that there was no such surprise in the case, and that the affair was one of sentiment merely. The first check which La Blancherie sustained arose from her one day meeting him in the Luxembourg with a feather in his hat. A philosopher in a feather! Some trivial stories told of him helped to compromise her ideal, and the matter became serious. "You cannot think how strange it seems to me. His features, though the same, have no longer the same expression, and do not indicate the same qualities. Oh, how powerful is illusion! I still rate him above common men, and especially above those of his own age; but he is no more an idol of perfection, no longer the first of his species,—in short, no longer my lover." These few passages, taken from her letters, in connection with some pages of the Memoirs, furnish a pointed lesson concerning the false light which pervades the heart's perspectives.

The last scene, in particular, where La Blancherie appeared so different from what she had supposed him, but at the close of which she still regarded him with generous esteem,—that slightly mysterious interview of four hours' duration,—is described in her Memoirs with an inaccuracy of remembrance very thoughtless and slightly cruel. It would seem from the Memoirs that she dismissed La Blancherie with something very like the air of a queen, while it appears from the letter to Sophie, that, hearing the approach of a visitor, she made him a slight motion with her hand to withdraw by one door while she went to receive her guest at the other,—“assuming,” she says, “her most playful manner, in order to conceal her adroit stratagem.” Are, then, these conflicting statements with regard to past impres-

* Adieu, my too unhappy and too perfect lover.

sions inevitable, even in the case of our most sincere emotions?

It may be,—for so nice a matter demands careful scrutiny,—it may be that the letter to Sophie tells but a part of the truth; perhaps she was sterner and more scornful with La Blancherie than she dares confess to her confidant; because her vanity was wounded by the memory of the past. I fear, however, that it is the Memoirs which (in condensing into a single scene the result of subsequent judgments) have unceremoniously misrepresented what in the retrospect she had long despised.

And, after all, where is the autobiographer who could bear to have the subsequent story of his experience compared, at all points, with his contemporary letters?

This sentiment, even as she afterwards represented it,—the loss of her mother, her varied reading, her relations with some few men of mark,—all combined, when she was about twenty-two, to give her vigorous mind such an impulse and scope that her power was fully revealed even to her own contracted circle. In vain she repeats, as often as possible, and with consummate grace, “I live in the shade. Twilight suffices for my happiness;” and, as Montaigne says, “one is never so well off as in the back shop.” With her strong nature and superior endowments, she often felt cramped behind the screen and in the entresol to which fate confined her. Her life overflows. She compares herself to a caged lion. She should have been a Spartan or Roman woman, or at least a man in France. We venture to quote the expression of a desire which certain famous heroines have since realized. “Come, then, to Paris,” she writes to the gentle and pious Sophie; “there is nothing like residence in a place where art and science, the presence of great men, and all sorts of intellectual resources, concur and vie with one another. How interesting it would be for us to study and walk together! How I desire to know men of ability of every sort! Sometimes I feel tempted to don a hat and breeches, for the sake of being free to look about and discover what is best in all orders of talent. I

have heard tales of women assuming such a disguise from motives of affection or self-sacrifice. Ah, if I were a little less rational, or circumstances were a little more in my favour, I swear that I have the requisite zeal. I am not surprised that Christina should have abandoned her throne for the sake of living peacefully with her beloved arts and sciences. Yet, if I were a queen, I would sacrifice my tastes to the duty of making my people happy. I would, indeed; but what a sacrifice! And so the fact that I wear no crown does not greatly trouble me, although my means are limited. What random talk! I love you all the same as Henry IV. loved Crillon. Adieu." Her friendship for Sophie, and the letters she writes during the first months of 1776, gain by this crowd of conflicting emotions. She herself confesses as much, and gives us the key to her great increase of tenderness. "Ah, Sophie! Sophie! you can judge how fully I appreciate the blessing of friendship, when I tell you it is the only sentiment I am free to indulge."

But Sophie alone did not suffice her even for friendship. Towards the middle of the same year (1776) a slight decline is perceptible; we hear some faint reproaches: "Sophie, Sophie, your letters are long delayed." While on the one side there were dreams of La Blancherie, on the other, at Amiens, there were thoughts of the cloister. Sophie had had a passing desire to become a *religieuse*. The two friends no longer inhabited quite the same world. They make peace, they return with ardour to their mutual love, but still it is a return, for in the career of friendship, as in the path of virtue, we retrograde the moment we cease to advance. I use Mme. Roland's own words. Henriette, the elder sister of Sophie, came to Paris to pass some months, and made a third in their intimacy. Her vivacious imagination and brilliant wit appear to great advantage beside the languor of her younger sister. At any rate our heroine's heart becomes divided. Henriette becomes a third self, and the ensuing letters are addressed to the two sisters jointly. M. Roland, also, begins to appear at rare

intervals,—an austere man, who at first inspires considerable awe. These things suffice to effect a diversion. They are mixed up with the details of private annoyances and domestic troubles. The correspondence, like human life, loses its unity as it proceeds.

But its literary ability increases. The maiden is now an able woman, mistress of her pen as well as her heart, and the play of thought and movement of composition obey her bidding. In what are to me the most interesting portions of the correspondence the editor is sure to make numerous erasures. I can imagine the difficulties and the scruples which may arise when the materials in hand are so rich, but I think the interest of the book depended largely on the compiler's preserving a kind of unity in his selection. He needed to shun both the diffuse and the fragmentary, and especially to keep a watchful eye upon the Memoirs, for the purpose of abridging those portions which are only a sort of duplication.

A postscript to the correspondence, accompanied by full details on the part of the editor, is worthy to close and crown the whole. I have alluded to Henriette, the elder sister, the second and more brilliant of Mme. Roland's two friends. 1793 had come, and years of absence and political difference had loosened, without sundering the ties that united the old playmates. Mme. Roland was a captive beneath the bolts of Sainte-Pélagie, awaiting sentence and the scaffold. Henriette hastened to her rescue. She wanted to change clothes with her, and remain a prisoner in her stead. "But they would kill you, my dear Henriette," persisted the noble victim; and she would not consent.

Apart from the little romance which I have endeavoured to separate from the rest of the book and make prominent, the reader will find in these volumes many a pleasant anecdote and item characteristic of the age. It was quite natural that the enthusiastic girl should have had a passionate desire to see and know Rousseau. She thought she had discovered a way. A Genoese, a friend of her father,

had to propose to his illustrious countryman the composition of a few musical airs. She begged to be honoured with the commission. Behold her, then, writing a beautiful letter to the philosopher of the Rue Plâtrière, in which she said that she would come in person for his answer. Two days later she set out with her maid, entered the shoemaker's alley, and tremulously climbed the stairs as if they had been the steps of a temple. But it was Thérèse who opened the door, and replied "No" to every question, keeping, all the while, her hand upon the lock. It was certainly better that she never saw Rousseau,—the supreme object of her worship,—for so the faiths of the intellect are best preserved.

Upon the wise and genial Boismorel, who plays so pleasant a part in the *Memoirs*, on Sevelinges, the academician,* on a certain Genoese, a man of heavier make, "whose mind is like a dark lantern, shedding light only on him who holds it;" on all these acquaintances of hers, whom she speedily makes our own, she bestows bright glances and remarks that indicate acute observation, and are almost as delightful as conversation itself. We obtain a peculiarly clear idea of one mature and very devoted friend of hers,—M. de Sainte-Lette, who came from Pondicherry, and afterwards returned to that place, whose knowledge of the world was great, who had experienced passion, who regretted his youth, who was, above all, an atheist. The atheist was a production of the eighteenth century. He took rank as such. His unbelief was almost a profession. When an individual was discovered to possess this quality, he was regarded with a species of horror not un-mixed with fascination. People communicated the fact to their friends mysteriously, as did our heroine in the case of M. de Wolmar and M. de Sainte-Lette. Three-quarters of the people of our day believe in nothing after the grave, and still never suspect that they are atheists. They go on at haphazard, in perfect unconcern, and excite no particular remark. Is not ours really the worse situation of the two?

* She calls him so, vol. ii. p. 107.

and does not the incredulous solemnity of the eighteenth century prove that the men of that day were nearer faith than we ?

M. Roland makes his appearance early with a letter of introduction from the Amiens friends ; but his character is not readily divined. From the beginning, she who is destined to shed historic lustre on his name, is anxious for his esteem, and takes pains to appear to advantage in his presence ; but the intellect only is involved ; it is a question of esteem merely. During these important visits they talk of everything,—the Abbé Raynal, Rousseau, Voltaire, Switzerland, government, the Greeks and Romans ; they glance by turns at all these serious subjects. For the most part they are tolerably harmonious, but the name of Raynal is a warmly-contested battlefield. M. Roland, with the common sense of an economist, allows himself to pronounce the philosophic historian of the two Indies an unmethodical charlatan, whose heavy volumes are fit only for wrapping-paper. The enthusiastic maiden cries out upon him. She defends Raynal as she would defend Rousseau. She cannot as yet discriminate between the two. Her taste is still confused. In matters of style she has not yet assigned to its proper place what is only of La Blancherie. So at every epoch we have the declamatory side by side with the original, and the two are easily confounded even by intelligent contemporaries. Campistron's best borders on Racine's weakest, and Raynal often suggests Rousseau. Time alone makes clear and permanent distinctions. This is true even of the works of the really original writer, who has catered too much to the taste of his disciples, and yielded too much to the desire of excessive applause. From these pages, which contemporary eyes, affected by the same disease, and tinged with the same jaundiced hue, as the author's own, admire as among his finest, and which are lauded with a kind of complacent unanimity, Time, with his humid wing, soon brushes away the ephemeral, and leaves in the very midst of the objects portrayed great disfiguring patches, which increase the effect of permanence about the few

truthful and uninjured tints. The eye readily lights upon such blemishes in these volumes of Mme. Roland's letters. Hers are the platitudes of her age, and they are atoned for by the countless marks of originality, whose freshness and grace they do but enhance.

The four or five years which elapsed between the death of her mother and her marriage with M. Roland brought her many hard and poignant, and, at the same time, petty trials. Her father was harassed, and on the road to ruin. She had glimpses of the truth, and longed to know all while yet she must smile on her father and on the world, and dissimulate her anxiety. "I should prefer the whistling of spears and the horrors of battle," she sometimes cried, "to the dull sound of the shafts that are tearing my heart; but it is the sage's struggle with fate." She was fresh from Plutarch and Seneca when she uttered this stoical sentiment; but she had read Homer as well, and declared with a smile, and in imagery less forced than the above, "Gaiety sometimes pierces through my anxieties like a sunray through the clouds. I shall have great need of philosophy to enable me to sustain the conflicts that are coming. I am like Ulysses clinging to the fig-tree; I wait for the ebb-tide to restore me to my ship."

M. Roland, who had been travelling in Italy, returns by way of Paris, but he does not visit her very regularly, and she is a little piqued. Once she dreams of him as completely ruined. She writes this to the sisters very dryly. Decidedly this is a busy man, not lavish of his pains. She who is so ready to draw portraits of her friends feels no confidence about attempting his. She observes him through too long a telescope, and for all she sees of him he might still be in Italy. We do not talk thus of those to whom we are indifferent. It is taken as a good sign by M. Roland, who is a careful observer, possibly a little doubtful of success, but otherwise not unnecessarily anxious, and who advances warily, slow, and sure, like reason and destiny. But for my own part, I perceive that I am falling into an error with which I have already been

reproached, and encroaching upon the dull and prosaic zone of life.

In all this portion of the correspondence, the tone of which has become very grave, in the midst of domestic vicissitudes and the sorrows that always beset the existence of a woman when she ceases to be a girl, there comes out, in ever bolder relief, one quality which is beyond all praise. An indescribably healthful, honourable, courageous spirit breathes through these pages. "Action! Action!" is her cry. "Most true it is," she is fond of repeating, "that the principle of good resides solely in that precious activity which rescues us from nullity, and fits us for anything that may arise." This love of labour, which she practically applied, brought her esteem, virtue, happiness,—all needful support in life and in death. It is because the last generation of the traduced eighteenth century believed firmly in those principles of which Mme. Roland in her purity and heroism offers us the worthiest illustration, because it was more or less fed and formed upon these, that in the frightful agonies which ensued, our nation, though shaken to its foundations, did not perish.

MADAME DE SOUZA.

A FRIEND who, after having seen much of the world, has withdrawn from it almost entirely, and who judges from a distance, and as it were from the shore, the swift whirlpool in which the rest of us are tossing, lately wrote me, *apropos* of certain rapid estimates I had made of contemporary works, "What you say of our 'sublimities' interests me extremely. Sublime they assuredly are. What they lack is calm and freshness, a little pure cold water wherewith to cool our burning palates." This quality of freshness and delicacy, this limpidity in emotion and sobriety in speech, this soft and quiet shading, as they disappear on all hands from actual life and the works of imagination now produced, become all the more precious when we encounter them in obscurity, and in those pleasing compositions where they were last reflected. It would be a mistake to suppose that there is aught of weakness or degeneracy in regretting these vanished charms—these flowers which apparently could only blow in the very last days of an order of society now passed away. The softly-tinted pictures of which we speak presuppose a degree of taste and soul-culture which democratic civilisation could not have abolished without detriment to itself, if something analagous thereto were not one day to reappear in our modern manners. Modern society, when it shall have become a little more settled and better defined, will also have its element of repose, its cool, mysterious nooks, its shades favourable to refined sentiment, a few tolerably ancient forests, a few undiscovered fountains. It will admit into its seemingly uniform framework a thousand varieties of

thought, and many a rare form of interior life : otherwise it will be, in one respect, far inferior to the civilisation which preceded it, and will barely satisfy the needs of a whole family of souls. In stirring times, in moments of incoherent and confused inauguration like the present, it is natural to make for the most important point, to busy one's self with the general working, and everywhere, even in literature, to strike boldly, aim high, and shout through trumpets and speaking-tubes. The modest graces will, perhaps, come back after a while, and come with an expression appropriate to their new surroundings. I would fain believe it ; but while hoping for the best, I feel sure that it will not be to-morrow that their sentiments and their speech will once more prevail. Meanwhile, we realize our need, and suffer from it. We betake ourselves, in hours of *ennui*, to the perfumes of the past—a past but of yesterday, which, nevertheless, will not return. And this is why I sat down the other morning and re-read “Eugène de Rothelin” and “Adèle de Sénange,” and why I speak of them to-day.

A young girl issuing for the first time from the convent where her whole childhood had been passed ;—a handsome, elegant, sentimental lord, such as used to frequent Paris about the year 1780, who encounters her with a slight degree of embarrassment, and appears to her from the first in the light of a saviour ;—a very old husband, good, sensible, paternal, never ridiculous, who marries the maiden solely to emancipate her from an egotistical mother, and secure to her fortune and a future ;—all the simplest everyday occurrences among these three beings, who, by a natural concurrence of events, are led to the resolve never to separate while the old man lives ;—scenes in the park or garden, sails, chats about the arm-chair, calls at the old convent, visits to old playmates, innocent and varied prattle,—jesting, tender, or crossed with gleams of passion ; generosity mingling with the growth of love, and blessing it ; then, for fear of a too uniform sweetness, the world sketched in profile for a background, and its crimes and

follies indicated ; more than one original, more than one fool, identified in passing by some amusing feature ; in a word, the actual life of a select circle ;—a gathering passion which steals along like the streams of Neuilly under curtains of verdure, lingering and meandering deliciously ; passing storms, like April rains, that leave no ravages ; and all managed to the last and in the least particular with an ease that never verges on freedom, with a nobleness of tone that never forces nature, with a spirit of kindly allowance that is never indelicate ;—such are the chief merits of a book whose harmony is unmarred by a single discordant word. The life and soul of it is the genius of Adèle—a genius winning, gay, versatile, winged like a bird, capricious and natural, timid and sensitive, roseate in its modesty, faithful, passing from smiles to tears with all the ardour of childhood.

We were on the eve of the Revolution when this charming book was written. The author published it in London, in 1793, amid calamity and privation. This Adèle de Sénange appeared in her festal robes, as a maiden of Verdun, escaped from the massacre, and ignorant of the fate of her companions.

Mme. de Souza, then Mme. de Flahaut, had been educated at a convent in Paris, and had married in extreme youth the Count de Flahaut, who was already fifty-seven years old. The convent is doubtless the one described in “Adèle de Sénange.” It had an adjacent hospital and a few very sage *pensionnaires* ; and her reward of merit used to be to go to this hospital every Monday evening, wait on the paupers, and read prayers with them. She lost her parents early, and memories of the convent were home memories for her. This early education influenced, as we shall see, her whole line of thought, and supplied vivid images for all her works. Married and lodging at the Louvre, she owed the idea of writing to the *ennui* induced by those political discussions which became more and more animated as the Revolution drew near. She was too young, she said, to have a fancy for such things, and she desired to create an inner world for herself. In the romance of “Emilie et Alphonse,”

the Duchess de Candale, then newly married, writes to her friend, Mlle. d'Astey, "I have made me a little retreat in one corner of my room. Here I have arranged a single chair, my piano and harp, a few books, a pretty table, on which are my sketches and my writing, and have drawn a kind of imaginary circle, which separates me from the rest of the apartment. If people come to see me, I hasten to overstep my barrier, that no one may penetrate within it; and when any one chances to approach my asylum, I can hardly contain my vexation. I cannot away with him." Mme. de Flahaut, in her chamber at the Louvre, must have made herself a retreat similar to Mme. de Candale's; but in her isolation she had an intimacy ready made. If any one attempted to cross her imaginary barrier by speaking to her of politics, she replied that M. de Sénange had had an attack of the gout, which occasioned her great anxiety. In "*Eugénie et Mathilde*," where she has described the effect produced upon a noble family by the early events of the Revolution, we may be allowed to attribute to herself some portion of the sentiments of Mathilde, who declares herself fatigued, though not distressed, by the excesses of the Revolution.* "*Adèle de Sénange*" was, therefore, written without literary pretence, and merely as a private pastime. Yet, one day, the author, yielding to a confiding impulse, raised her ideal barrier, and proposed to a friend to make arrangements for a reading before a small number of persons. The offer thus made was not accepted. People were willing to allow her an interesting mind, but not the talent of an author. So "*Adèle de Sénange*" failed to gain hearers, and we know that "*Paul and Virginia*" obtained them with difficulty.

The Revolution developed its phases in rapid succession, and Mme. de Flahaut quitted Paris, and, after the 2nd of September, France. M. de Flahaut was imprisoned, and

* Rather minute details of the life and sentiments of Mme. de Flahaut during this period may be found in the Memorial of the American Gouverneur Morris, who arrived in Paris in February 1780, and very soon obtained an introduction to her. (See vol. i. of the French edition, pp. 236, 241, 249, 257, and especially 250.)

soon fell a victim. By dint of gold and diamonds, lavished by the family and friends outside upon the jailers, he had succeeded in making his escape, and was living in a safe retreat. But some one told in his presence that his advocate had been imprisoned on suspicion of having afforded him an asylum, and M. de Flahaut, in order to justify the innocent, quitted his hiding-place at six in the morning, and repaired to the Commune, where he lodged information against himself, and a few days later was guillotined. On the death of Robespierre, Mme. de Flahaut quitted England with her son, and repaired to Switzerland, hoping even then to return to France; but the obstacles were not removed.* Ever roaming about in the vicinity of that forbidden France, she made her home at Hamburg, and it was in that city that the celebrity she had won by "Adèle de Sénange" procured her the acquaintance of M. de Souza, whom she married in 1802. In the interval she had published "Emile et Alphonse," in 1797, and "Charles et Marie," in 1801.

"Charles et Marie" is a graceful, touching little English romance, somewhat in the style of Miss Burney. The landscape of parks and English cottages, the manners, the absurdities of hunting ladies and learned ladies, the pure and languishing sentiment, make up a complete picture, which shows how naïve an inspiration the author had derived from her residence in England. An ingenious, and, in the matter of subtilty at least, a competent critic, M. Patin,† in passing judgment upon Mme. de Souza,

* The Memorial of Gouverneur Morris, already cited, gives some very curious particulars of the residence of Mme. de Flahaut in Switzerland. We behold her, in several of her letters, the active and influential counsellor of a young prince who has since become a king—Louis Philippe. She travelled with him from Bremgarten, in Switzerland, to Brunswick, and made haste to rejoin him at Hamburg. (French edition, vol. i. pp. 449-453.) After the Revolution of 1830, whenever any allusion was made to the Tuilleries, where her son was in high favour, Mme. de Souza took care delicately to hint that she herself did not go there.

† "Répertoire de Littérature," and afterwards in his *Miscellanies*, 1840.

gives his decided preference to this pretty novel of "Charles et Marie." I, too, like it, but not with the same degree of partiality. There is (if I may venture to say so), as in Miss Burney's own stories, too great a profusion of vague tints, soft even to effeminacy,—a pale blonde colouring. Mme. de Souza usually draws better, and with a greater variety of colour. It is in "Charles et Marie" that we find that ingenious remark so often quoted,—“The faults on which we plume ourselves are like ugliness in full dress. They are seen in the strongest possible light.” If Mme. de Flahaut's journey to England, and the sky and scenery of that country, imparted a milky, misty hue to this romance of "Charles et Marie," we find in "Eugénie et Mathilde," which did not appear until 1811, an equally striking reflex of nature in the north, of the shores of Holland, and the roadsteads of the Baltic, where she lingered so long in exile. “Verdure in the northern latitudes has a peculiar tint, a uniform and tender hue, which comes by degrees to soothe and calm one. This aspect, producing no surprise, leaves the soul unmoved,—a condition which has its charms, especially, perhaps, when one is unhappy. Sitting in the fields, the sisters yielded to protracted reverie, and lost themselves in idle thought, until, without having been diverted, they returned composed.” And a little farther on: “M. de Revel, hoping to divert the minds of his family, took pains to make them admire the rich pasture-lands of Holstein, and the fine trees along the shores of the Baltic,—that sea whose pallid waters differ in no respect from those of the numerous lakes which adorn the country, the evergreen turf reaching to the very water's edge. They were struck with that look of strangeness which Nature wears to all of us in countries far remote from those which gave us birth. The smiling perspective of the Lake of Ploën made them, somehow, breathe more freely. Possessing nothing of their own, they learned, like the poor, to find their recreation in a walk, their reward in a beautiful day; to enjoy, in short, the blessings bestowed on all.” Mme. de Souza does not often pause to describe Nature.

She does it here with the more enjoyment, in that a profound and consoling memory mingles with her words. The laughing Adèle de Sénange, who knew only the alleys of Neuilly and the poplars of its island, is well-nigh transformed, beside the Baltic, into a sister of the dreamy Valérie.

And, in fact, among those romantic conceptions which have become living realities, Adèle de Sénange is a sister worthy of Valérie, as she is of Mlle. de Clermont and the Princess de Clèves, and as Eugène de Rothelin is the noble brother of Adolphe, Edouard, Lépreux, and that Chevalier des Grioux, so fragile, and yet so easily pardoned. I omit the great René, in the solitude of his pre-eminence. Happy he, who, drawing either from himself or his surroundings, from memory or from imagination, shall create a being worthy the society of those whom I have named! shall add an unlooked-for brother or sister to that family which is loved even more than it is admired! He will not wholly die.

“Eugène de Rothelin,” published in 1808, is considered by some excellent judges the most exquisite of Mme. de Souza’s works, superior even to “Adèle de Sénange.” If it were needful to decide and choose between works almost equally fascinating, we should indeed be seriously embarrassed; for if “Eugène de Rothelin” represents the talent of Mme. de Souza in the utmost perfection of its skill, “Adèle de Sénange” reveals the stream nearest its source, in its most natural, and, so to speak, its gladdest outgushing. Yet, in respect of consummate art, power of composition, nice observation, invention, and description, “Eugène” is a greater achievement than “Adèle.” To apply to the present case what I have elsewhere had occasion to say of the author of “Indianna” and “Valentine,” any moderately refined and sensitive soul who should dare to write unaffectedly possesses the material for a good romance. Taking our actual situation for a groundwork, and slightly disguising or modifying its accessories, we have at once the means of interesting ourselves, as if in

the preparation of confidential memoirs, and of inducing others to share our interest. The difficulty lies in making a second effort, after the first has been so tender; after one has breathed, under a more or less treacherous disguise, a secret which exhaled perfume as it passed away. The life of Adèle de Sénange is divided into two periods: the convent where she was reared and was happy for years, and a marriage, also happy, although unequal in point of age. In "Eugène de Rothelin" the author abandons the semi-personal conception which touches her heart so nearly. We have no more a simple picture of youth and morning, where many a common trait is unconsciously revealed, and fixed in living colours upon the canvas. Here is a firmer and more finished outline, a subject less identified with the author. There is no lack of tenderness, but observation of the world occupies a larger space. Sentiment and irony are balanced by means of skilfully-managed half-tints. The ingenuous passion—coquettish at times, but always captivating—of Athénaïs and Eugène is relieved against a background of harassing mystery. Even when it gleams along the garden terraces or the glazed corridor, of a sunny morning, we dread the absent M. de Rieux, wherever he may be, or catch a glimpse of the austere and sorrowful figure of the father of Eugène; and if we return to the drawing-room, the tenderness of the two lovers is diverted, and wreathes with doubtful grace the arm-chair of the charming but terrible old *maréchale*, who jokes and laughs and propounds questions about happiness,—a kind of unguarded La Bruyère.

Marie Joseph Chénier has briefly eulogized Mme. de Souza, in words characterized by his own precision and elegance, and specially applicable to Eugène. "These pretty romances," he says, "do not, it is true, represent the development of great passions; neither must we look in them for any deep study of humanity at large: but we are at least sure of finding here the most subtle social perceptions, pictures true to the life and delicately finished, a style moderately ornate, the correctness of a good book

with the ease of eloquent conversation, the intellect which says nothing commonplace, and the taste which says nothing superfluous." But, apart from these general encomiums, which are applicable to a whole class of literary artists, it should be said of "Eugène de Rothelin" that it portrays one side of a century, and that a brilliant, chaste, poetic side, and one which we sometimes fail to recognise. Under this aspect the graceful romance is no longer an individual and isolated work. It acquires a higher, or, at least, a wider significance.

The mind and genius of Mme. de Souza belong wholly to the eighteenth century. She observed it very closely, and loved its society, its tone, its customs, its culture, its nicely-apportioned life. We do not examine the influence upon her of Jean Jacques, or any other noted writer of that stamp, as we do in the case of Mme. de Staël, Mme. de Krüdener, Mme. Cottin, or Mme. de Montolieu. Mme. de Flahaut was less of the nineteenth century than they; less carried away by enthusiasm towards unknown regions. Society and the world were her teachers. She trained herself to see and feel within definite limits. There grew up in the last half of the reign of Louis XIV., under the special influence of Mme. de Maintenon, a school of politeness, of self-restraint, of decorous prudence even in youthful passions, of mild but unlimited authority in old age. People were pious, they were worldly, they were witty; but all was regulated and softened by conventionalism. We may follow the footsteps of this illustrious dynasty, from Mme. de Maintenon, Mme. de Lambert, Mme. du Deffand (after her reformation), Mme. de Caylus, and the young girls who enjoyed Esther at Saint-Cyr, down to the Maréchale de Beauvau,* who seems to have been the original of the Maréchale d'Estouteville in "Eugène de Rothelin," and that Marquis de Créquy, who, we are told, died a centenarian, and whose Memoirs, I strongly suspect,

* It was certainly she, and not the Maréchale de Luxembourg, as erroneously stated in the first volume of the Memoirs of Mme. de Créquy, who was the original of the portrait of Mme. d'Estouteville.

have slightly suffered at the hands of a certain man of genius.* Mme. de Flahaut, who was young when the century died, preserved this very portion of the inheritance she derived from it, modified indeed by her own good taste, and adapted to the new court in which she was to live.

Others have depicted the eighteenth century under its cynical or stormy aspects, its incongruities and irregularities. Voltaire has scoffed at it; Jean Jacques has extolled and underrated it by turns; Diderot, in his correspondence, makes us admire it as a brilliant and magnificent medley; Crébillon *filz* sets forth its ultra refinement of speech and its real licentiousness; the author of "Eugène de Rothelin" paints for us the age itself in its exquisite flower, its ideal and harmonious splendour. "Eugène de Rothelin" is, as it were, the romance of eighteenth-century chivalry; what "Tristan le Léonois" and other romances of the thirteenth century were to the chivalry of that day; what "Le petit Jehan de Saintré" or "Galaor" were to the fifteenth;—that is, a likeness, idealized and flattered, but a likeness still. Any well-born man of that day might have taken Eugène for his model. He is a Sir Charles Grandison without mawkishness or *ennui*. He has not, as yet, quite arrived at the dignity of that slightly solemn portrait which represents the *maréchale's* idea of what he was to be at twenty-five,—a portrait in the style of Mlle. de Montpensier. Eugène, amid the world of amenities and conventionalities, has his jealousies, his ebullitions of mirth, his passing

* In a passage of doubtful friendliness, the author of these *Memoirs*, speaking of that exquisite tone of the great world which he cannot deny to the author of "Adèle de Sénange," expresses a degree of astonishment at its presence which is singular and wholly misplaced as regards Mme. de Flahaut. But even if the grounds of this judgment on the part of the author of the *Memoirs* were not visibly exaggerated, his surprise would be none the less unaccountable; for, in my opinion, one can never be in a condition to observe this same world to better purpose, to appreciate and depict it more nicely, than when, without exactly belonging to it, one has early taken one's place there.

follies. One day he had almost compromised his sweet friend Athénaïs by his ill-humour at play. "What!" says she to him the next day, "distress me, and, what is worse, risk breaking your word? Eugène in the wrong? I would not have believed it!" Eugène, then, has his faults, and Athénaïs her imprudences; but these render them only the more loveable. Nobody moralizes but the *maréchale*; and she does it with a tact that is almost always successful. Athénaïs and Eugène are caprice and poesy,—not easily rendered amenable to rules, but becoming obedient in the end, and able to soften their master. When, in the last scene, in one of those straight alleys where one can be seen at so great a distance, Mme. d'Estouteville advances slowly, leaning on the arm of Eugène, all is summed up for me in this single picture. If ever author succeeded in uniting the thoughtfulness of the moralist to the animation of the painter, and raising romance to the level of poetry, it has been accomplished in "Eugène de Rothelin."* What if, in the characterization of her charming hero, the author supposed herself to be presenting a model for imitation, while the present generation is no longer disposed so to regard it? She succeeded in drawing from a recent past a type of character never before acknowledged or perceived,—a type which completes and adorns the memory of that past. The spirit of Eugène was invoked in the quatrains of Mme. d'Houdetot.

After "Eugène de Rothelin," there still remain to be noticed two romances of Mme. de Souza, more prolix than the masterpieces we have mentioned, but, nevertheless, excellent compositions—"Eugénie et Mathilde" and the "Comtesse de Fargy." The convent plays a conspicuous part in these two tales, as we have already seen it in "Adèle de Sénange." There was, in short, a more im-

* This very name of Rothelin—so graceful and easily pronounced—recalls one branch of the descendants of the valiant Duncis. The Abbé de Rothelin, the tender and faithful friend of Polignac, was of this family.

portant item in the life and thought of Mme. de Souza than the facts of her having read Jean Jacques and La Bruyère, beheld the French Revolution, suffered as an *émigrée*, and assisted at the pomps of the empire,—her education, namely, in a convent. I would venture to affirm that no circumstance in her career had a more lasting significance than this; none furnished so steadfast a groundwork for her dreams. The religion and morals of her books are strict and pure; yet she seldom regards the cloister on its fervent and mystical side. She sees in it little of the contrite expiation of the *Héloïses* and the *La Vallières*. The author of "*Lelia*," who was also reared in a convent, and who received a deep impression from her training, has rendered with very different expression the pious tranquillity of such a home. But, as I have said, the author of the "*Comtesse de Fargy*" and "*Eugénie et Mathilde*" actually belongs, by her tastes, to the eighteenth century. To her the convent is something gay, gracious, and romantic, like *Saint-Cyr*,—an aviary of friendly doves, filled, as a rule, with the inquisitive chatter of volatile innocence. "That portion of the garden which they pompously denominate the wood, is only a cluster of trees before a very minute house, wholly separate from the convent, although enclosed by its walls. But the religieuses have a way of pleasing themselves by giving great names to their little possessions. Accustomed to privation, the least things are considerable in their eyes." Such are the convents of *Blanche* and *Eugénie*. Yet in *Eugénie's*, at the time of the dispersion of the communities by the Revolution, there were eloquent scenes; and that despoiled prioress who joyfully profits by the retreat of *Eugénie* to rule the house, if only for a day, is a well-studied character.

Two elements are blended in the "*Comtesse de Fargy*,"—observation, experience, and the conflict with obstacles, as illustrated by *Mme. de Nançay* and her old friend, *M. de Entrague*, and the sentimental story of the *Marquis de Fargy* and his father. The latter pleases me least; and, in general, aside from "*Eugène de Rothelin*" and "*Adèle de*

Sénange," the development of sentiment in the tales of Mme. de Souza is not as original as the moral observations and the piquant discourse. These specimens of handsome, melancholy young persons, like the Marquis de Fargy, and, elsewhere, the Spaniard Alphonse and Ladislas the Pole, in "Eugénie et Mathilde," easily fall into mere romanticism, while the rest is real life portrayed with the most delicate truth. In the connection between the venerable M. d'Entrague and Mme. de Nançay, Mme. de Souza has essayed to depict one of those friendships of the olden time which endured for half a century, and ended only with life. A woman, when she left her convent, was at once married, from motives of pure expediency; but the needs of her heart soon asserted themselves, and then she proceeded consciously and deliberately to form a single permanent tie. This, at least, was the order where expediency reigned, and in that ideal of the eighteenth century which was not, it must be confessed, universally accepted. The amiable M. d'Entrague, perpetually scolded by Mme. de Nançay, and as constantly flattered by Blanche, who finds herself involuntarily subserving every one of his ends, is a person whom we have known and loved, although the species is well-nigh extinct. Mme. de Nançay is alive also, captious but kindly,—one who can be influenced by a little manœuvring, without herself suspecting it. "Mme. de Nançay re-entered the house disposed to quarrel with everybody. She knew well enough that she was a little irritable; for, in a life where we have had repeated experience of ourselves, if we do not know ourselves perfectly, we at least have our suspicions."

"Eugénie et Mathilde," which we have already quoted, is the longest and best sustained of Mme. de Souza's productions, always excepting "Engène" and "Adèle." Here we have a complete picture of the inner life of a noble family during the years of the Revolution. Eugénie, who has been forced to quit her convent, and who becomes a kind of tutelary angel to her family, constantly attracts and detains the gaze by her meek figure, her long black

robe, her gauze-veiled tresses, and the great abbess's cross which she wears so worthily. There is a very fine suggestion of sentiment where she goes out into the park to breathe the fresh air of the autumn morning, carrying in her arms her sister's child, little Victor; and when the baby clings to her neck, and nestles up to her face to avoid the cold, she feels in her heart the vague stirrings of maternal tenderness, at the very moment when Count Ladislas meets her. It is not for words to express these dim thrills of Eugénie's; melody alone could translate them.*

In "Eugénie et Mathilde" Mme. de Souza has revealed her own personality more fully than in any other work. There is one page which I can never read without emotion,

* Here follows what M. Sainte-Beuve calls "a sketch of that virginal air," which he "offers to some graceful composer," and of which the following is an inadequate version.—Tr.

Sleep, precious one! 'Tis sweet to feel anew
 Thy little hand along my bare neck gliding,
 Thy little forehead in my bosom hiding;
 Sleep, precious one! I am thy mother too!

Thine own poor mother, love, is suffering
 Such terror for her Edmund, thou must know,
 Gone from him whither honour bade him go,
 To give his life, if need be, for his king.

Lay thy soft hand upon my neck anew;
 Sleep, precious one! I am thy mother too!

Can so much sorrow, then, dissolve in peace,
 Beneath the bright smile of the misty morn,
 And warmth of new-born sunrays, at each turn
 Rekindling where they died among the trees?

Lay thy soft hand on my bare neck anew;
 Sleep, precious one! I am thy mother too!

Given into my tender care, it seems,
 How comes it, then, dear, that thine innocent lips
 Call forth my sighs, and that my spirit slips
 Backward, allured by long-forgotten dreams?

and which I beg leave to quote in illustration of her character. It contains the heart-cry of many a mother under the empire, which Mme. de Souza, thinking of herself and her son, could not suppress. Mme. de Revel, who is secretly unhappy, begins to compassionate those mothers who have only daughters, because, as soon as these are married, they are separated from their families in interest and name. For the first time since the birth of Mathilde, she regrets that she never had a son. "Fool!" cries Mme. de Souza, interrupting the narrative; "for then would her sorrows have been heavier, and her anxieties more sharp. Poor mothers! your infant sons absorb all your thoughts, embrace all your future; but just as you fancy that you

Awake, my own! I know not what I fear:
 Too fond, too close the little hands are gliding;
 Too warm the head within my bosom hiding;
 For I am not thy mother, O my dear!

For every faithful heart some vow, some word;
 Honour for Edmund, Edmund for Mathilde;
 But is this I, with sighs and yearnings filled
 Of earthly love—a maiden of the Lord?

Awake! thy light touch from my neck remove;
 For I am not thy mother, O my love!

Can I feel baby-kisses undefiled?
 With vague oblivion soothe my lonely lot?
 Or, even in my dreams, see—and sin not—
 The frequent vision of the Holy Child?

Awake! thy light touch from my neck remove;
 For I am not thy mother, O my love!

But no: the Father of the fatherless
 Is not so cruel, will not thus ensnare
 His exiled handmaid in this garden fair,
 Ruth's God and Rachel's, in her dire distress.

Sleep on, my love! Once more 'tis sweet to feel
 Thy little hand along my bare neck gliding,
 Thy little forehead in my bosom hiding:
 Sleep on, my child! I am thy mother still!

are rewarded for your years of care, they escape you. Their active youth, their foolish passions, transport and lead them astray: you are smitten with an anguish hitherto unknown.

“Poor mothers! you have a heart-throb for their every emotion. The child of yesterday has to-day become a man: he wants to be free. He thinks he is his own master: he essays to go forth into the world alone. Until he have purchased his experience, until you hear him coming back, there will be no more sleep for your eyes. You will wake long before him, but never betray the fond anxieties of your indefatigable affection. By many a subterfuge, by many a spell, it will be needful to conceal your surveillance over that young and independent creature.

“Henceforth everything will agitate you. Scan the features of the man in power to see whether or no your son have compromised his own fortune and promotion. Watch the faces of the frivolous women who smile on him: see that he is not betrayed by a false or unhappy love.

“Poor mothers! you are no longer your own. Always preoccupied, answering with an absent air, your watchful ear catches the words let fall by your son in the next room. His voice rises; the conversation becomes warm. Perhaps he has made an implacable enemy or a dangerous friend, or involved himself in a mortal quarrel. All this first year you know, though he knows it not, that his happiness, his life are at stake every instant and at every step. Poor mothers! poor mothers! you can only advance with trembling!

“He is going into the army! Ineffable grief! ceaseless, restless, heart-rending anxiety! And yet, if, after his first campaign, he return from the tumult of the camp eager for glory, and yet satisfied with your peaceful dwelling; if he is still frank and kindly to your old servants, gay and attentive to your old friends; if his open look, his childlike smile, his watchful and deferential tenderness, make you feel that he loves to be near you,—O happy, happy mother!” This was printed in 1811; and it is said

that Bonaparte read portions of the book, and did not like it.*

We will not speak of Mme. de Souza's other works,—“Mlle. de Tournon” and the “Duchesse de Guise;” not that they are by any means wanting in subtilty and grace, but because in them the historical issue is complicated by moral observations, which come between the reader and the book, and, for us, spoil its effect. In “Mlle. de Tournon” we have the development of a touching incident related in the Memoirs of Margaret of Valois. The author of “Cinq-Mars” is the only writer of our time who has succeeded in harmonizing the truthful portraiture of an epoch with the glow of romantic sentiment. People were less critical in the days of the “Princess de Clèves,” or even at the time when “Mlle. de Clermont” appeared. We cannot complain. Suppose this charming novel had, unhappily, not been executed, could it be so much as attempted, now that we have read, in the spiteful, conjuring book of the Princess Palatine, “The duchess's three daughters are the handsomest girls that ever lived. The so-called Mlle. de Clermont is the most beautiful, but I think her sister, the Princess de

* He changed his mind, however. Returning from Berlin, on one occasion, Mme. de Souza went to Saint Cloud to see the Empress Josephine. The emperor was on the steps, impatient to be off hunting. The fiery horses were stamping at the foot of the flight. He was vexed at the sight of a woman, thinking that she would detain the empress, for whom he was waiting. He approached Mme. de Souza with a sufficiently sombre brow, and, recognising her, said brusquely, “Ah! you are from Berlin. Well, are they fond of France there?” She saw the ill-humour on the brow of the terrible sphinx. “If I say, Yes,” she thought to herself, “he will say, ‘She is a fool;’ and if I say, No, he will think me insolent.” “Yes, sire,” she replied; “they are fond of France as old women are fond of young ones.” The emperor's face brightened. “Very good, very good!” he exclaimed twice, and as if congratulating her on her escape from the snare. As for Mme. de Souza, she was rewarded by his glorious smile, and liked to adduce this incident as a proof that familiarity with the world, and the habit of expressing one's thoughts, help to make the latter apposite; “for,” said she, “that answer of mine was so entirely involuntary, and almost unconscious, that I was tempted to turn round upon the spot to see if some one had not whispered it to me.”

Conti, is more amiable. The duchess can drink a great deal without losing her wits, and her daughters would fain imitate her ; but they soon become intoxicated, and cannot control themselves like their mother." Oh, blessed ignorance of history, innocence of primitive romance-writers ! where are ye ?

Those who have the honour of Mme. de Souza's acquaintance find in her that supreme good-breeding which she has so well described ; none of those unnecessary and widely-aimed words which are too common in our day ; clear and definite turns of expression ; a skilful yet simple arrangement of thought ; brilliancy without pretension ; remarks which haunt the memory ; something, in short, of what constituted the distinctive character of the eighteenth century, from Fontenelle to the Abbé Morellet, but with a touch of sentiment peculiarly feminine. Moralist of the heart's secret places, she has small faith in the mighty progress of the present. She would be severe on many of our noisy youthful notions, if her genial and indulgent spirit were capable of severity. The author of " Eugène de Rothelin " has, as may be imagined, small taste for times of agitation and violent debate. A friend who inquired, in 1814, her opinion of the real state of France, judging otherwise than by the newspapers, received this reply : that the condition of France resembled a book open in the middle, which the ultras were reading backward, from right to left, in the attempt to return to the beginning, while the liberals were rushing through it from left to right, eager to reach the end, but whose actual open page no one was perusing. How else could the Maréchale d'Estouteville have spoken of our times ?

An injurious epigraph having been inadvertently attributed to her in a recent work, Mme. de Souza wrote this model rectification, which reveals her whole character : " Monsieur has been betrayed into an error. The saying in question was accredited to a certain literary man, whose name, though he is long since dead, I will not permit myself to mention. For myself, I never either penned or uttered such a sentence,

which comprehends all the ages in its sweeping injustice and whose tone is so far removed from the polished moderation which a woman ought always to observe."

The scrupulous Atticism of Mme. de Souza shrunk, above all things, from the charge of rudeness in speech.

Mme. de Souza died in Paris on the 16th of April 1836, preserving to the last her courtesy of spirit and her indulgent smile.

MADAME DE DURAS.

THE Restoration, although comprising, in its fifteenth years course, so brief a period and so narrow a space, presents to view certain incidents, certain groups of opinions and of individuals, and certain isolated figures, which appear to great advantage under the conditions of that time, and which, while we do not in the least adopt their style, we are frequently surprised to find ourselves regretting, as we regret all that is rare and brilliant, harmonious, and transitory. More than once we have had occasion to point out under what auspicious circumstances, and by what a combination of diverse sentiments, that school of poetry and art arose, which was the natural fruit of the last years of the Restoration, and which, in respect of its origin merely, and entirely apart from the works which its scattered celebrities may yet produce, will ever be held in honour.

In the several departments of history, philosophy, and criticism, there were also formations essential to this era, deriving from it their means of progress, growth, and culture. Our present intention is merely to speak of that element in the world of mind which was not hostile to the principles of the Restoration,—never opposing it either by open attack or secret strategy,—but which attempted to modify the order of which it was itself an outgrowth, and might have proved its strength and its adornment, if that order had not made haste, one fine morning, to fire its own magazine. In the realm of high society, this intellectual movement, so fruitful even then and so flattering in its promise, had its centre and focus in two or three so-called doctrinary salons. The prevailing tone of these coteries was

at all events serious,—the ordinary tone of debate, of protracted, sustained, political or literary discussion, with psychological asides. In them conversation savoured of learning, and amusement of instruction. This picture, however, would need to be considerably toned down, if the doctrinary zone were supposed to extend from M. Royer Collard, through the salons of MM. Guizot, de Broglie, and Barante, to M. de Sainte-Aulaire. But in the fashionable world, and on the surface of the society which it patronized, the Restoration was destined to introduce other combinations more complex still. Between the studious, argumentative, doctrinary circles,—noble in themselves, indeed, but especially distinguished by their fruits,—and the purely aristocratic and frivolous circles, there was a strongly-marked interval, an obstinate and utter divorce; new lights and modern ideas on the one hand, and the charm of antiquity on the other, separated by a spirit of pretension and mutual hauteur. Yet here, precisely, was reconciliation to be conceived and attempted. As from the midst of the royalist ranks there issued, at intervals, an eloquent voice, inviting legitimacy and liberty to a chivalrous alliance, and invoking, in the realm of politics, the ideal of a constitutional monarchy, so, simultaneously and with greater success, there appeared in the most select circle of society a rare woman, who quietly effected, in her own vicinity, a marvellous compromise between the new authorities and the tone and tastes of other days. The salon of Mme. de Duras, her personal ascendancy and everything connected therewith, illustrate, in the clearest possible manner, the era of the Restoration,—illustrate it by an aspect of lingering exclusiveness and partial condescension, a compound of aristocracy and affability, grave, but never dull, brilliant and witty, but on no account vulgar, semi-liberal and insensibly progressive,—by that system of illusions and concessions, which, though elsewhere attended by struggle and effort, produced here only a general impression of grace. It was a natural product of the Restoration; like one of those flowery islets, formed temporarily upon the surface of

a lake, where contrary currents meet without too great a shock. The whole slightly artificial structure of those fifteen years has been compared to a kind of Saint-Germain terrace, having its base washed by that popular surge which ultimately destroyed it. And on that terrace there was a nook—not its least attractive for shade and prospect—worthy to preserve the name of Mme. de Duras, and sure to find mention in any detailed history of the time. No doubt the influence of this salon was slight, immediate, and temporary; and though rendered positive by M. de Chateaubriand, who was in some sort its political representative, it still accomplished less, and left upon posterity very much slighter traces, than, for instance, the doctrinary salons to which we have alluded, and which constituted a centre of instruction and a school. The general effect of society here was rather, despite the freshness of its splendour, that of a last tender reminiscence, a reflex of the past amid the present hopes of the Restoration,—a parting glow dependent upon a thousand circumstances of cloud and sun, never to be reproduced. There were few, besides Mme. de Duras, who could have brought to her difficult position the necessary qualifications,—the state and influence of the Duke de Duras, his deference to herself, her own simple and refined mind, the generosity which predisposed her in favour of all merit; even that liberty-loving blood of Kersaint which flowed in her veins, and, at certain moments, irresistibly dyed her brow,—and all reduced to the same mild and conciliatory tone by the supreme authority of fashion.

It would betray a very imperfect knowledge of Mme. de Duras to pronounce her merely a woman of refined mind, and delicate, sensitive soul,—as might be supposed from the mollifying influence which she exercised in the world, and from a cursory perusal of her charming publications. She was stronger, grander, endowed with a larger capacity for passion, than would appear at first sight. There were mighty springs and a noble unrest in this nature, ready to be engrossed by all genuine affections and all serious issues.

Like the epoch which it was her mission to represent and adorn, she concealed beneath a brilliant and finely-toned exterior more than one struggle, more than one storm.

The Duchess de Duras was born at Brest, about ten years before the outbreak of the Revolution. Her father, Count de Kersaint, was one of the most skilful of seamen, up to the time when the Revolution made of him an illustrious citizen and a martyr. At the age of seven, little Clara was admitted to familiar intercourse with her parents. Mine de Duras herself says that she had no childhood, having been, from the first, rational and serious. Her affections found full employment at the domestic hearth, until the Revolution came to introduce new and distracting emotions. We can imagine with what impassioned interest this young spirit followed from afar her father's efforts and his danger. The grief occasioned by the death of Louis XVI. was the first blow given to her deep sensibility. That of Kersaint* speedily followed. Flight from France having become necessary, Mlle. de Kersaint embarked for America in company with her mother, whose health had been shattered and her mind impaired by all her misfortunes. She went first to Philadelphia, and afterwards to Martinique, where she managed her mother's property with a prudence and authority far beyond her years. Suddenly left an orphan and a great heiress, notwithstanding the European confiscations, she repaired to England, where she married the Duke de Duras. Memories of that emigration, her stay in England, and the death of the king, formed the

* Kersaint bore a great and intrepid part in the Convention. Ever in the breach, ready to protest against iniquity, defend the innocent, or accuse to their faces sanguinary men, he deserved to have his conduct become a kind of model for this species of political action. Opposed to the men who, no longer approving of a Revolution, and unwilling to accept anything from an Assembly, stood aside, withdrew, more or less of them, and even emigrated to some extent, there were those who remained upon the spot, testifying aloud, disputing every step, and dying when their time came with words of warning upon their lips. As an offset to the system of emigration, we have the system personified by Kersaint, which might well be called by his name.

background of her life. She loved to revert to these things and to describe them. M. de Chateaubriand, in his unpublished Memoirs, after a vivid picture of this period of the English emigration, and of the different people whom he then met, adds, "The Duchess de Duras must certainly have been a bride in London at this time, but I was not to know her for years. How often do we unconsciously pass that by which might have constituted our life's greatest joy, as the sailor clears the waters of some blessed country which is removed from him but one horizon,—but one day's sail!"*

Returning to France, during the consulate, with her two daughters,—the only children she ever had,—she found in them an absorbing care and an object of tender interest. She remained isolated under the empire, never appearing at court, but living for the most part in a retired castle in Touraine,† where she devoted herself to the education of her girls, charity to her neighbours, and domestic life. She had so little self-consciousness, that it seems as if she might easily have remained for ever ignorant of her own power. She was singularly capable of adapting herself to different persons and circumstances, and that naturally, without apparent effort or definite intent. She was very simple with the simple, and commonplace with the insignificant, not because she despised them, but because, under such circumstances, it did not occur to her to be brilliant. She used to tell how people often said of her, when she was quite young, "Clara is a very good girl, but 'tis a pity she has so little mind." Absence of pretension was her most distinctive trait. She did not at that time

* During her stay in England, did not the young Duchess de Duras have to overcome certain prejudices of the emigrant world, on the score of her birth,—noble, yet so intimately connected with the Revolution? Did she not at times have painful experience of that feeling of being out of place, that sense of discord, which, under different aspects, seems often to have occupied her thoughts, and which, in her touching productions, she has transferred to a different kind of inequality?

† The Chateau d'Ussé, on the Loire.

think of authorship. The books she read—scientific or other—were good of their kind, but few. She was familiar with the English poets, and dreamed over some of their verses. Thus uniting the culture of her intellect to a most systematic care of her house and family, she maintained that the two were mutually helpful; that you came from the one class of occupations better prepared for the other; and even went so far as jestingly to declare, that a knowledge of Latin was useful in making sweetmeats. The most noble and illustrious friendships were, however, growing up around her. M. de Chateaubriand devoted hours to her, and many of the great pages of the future were written by her at his dictation. From this time forward she seems also to have kept a correspondence with Mme. de Staël, and their friendly relations were destined to become yet closer at the subsequent period of the illustrious exile's return. Even those who have merely seen their portraits cannot have failed to remark the strong resemblance, if only in the black eyes and style of coiffure, between these two women, whose works are so dissimilar. But that which they especially had in common, and which makes the author of "Edouard" at heart own-sister to the author of "Delphine," was fervour of spirit, strength of feeling, a capacity for generous indignation and self-devotion.

If I dared risk the effect of the contrast, I would mention, as a similar term, one other name,—a Girondist name, also, but thoroughly plebeian,—that of Mme. Roland. In these household cares and this domestic simplicity, alternating with the exercises of an elevated thought, who can fail to discover the germ of a resemblance? Other points of sympathy between these two might possibly be detected beneath the differences of education and fortune. The mind of Mme. de Duras was certainly more delicate, less masculine, and, it may be, less broad than that of Kersaint's *

* Mme. Roland passes a severe judgment upon Kersaint in her Memoirs. He had certain of the fastidious habits of a gentleman, and these she did not like. But we, their posterity, love to associate their generous names, consecrated by a common martyrdom.

companion on the scaffold, but she yields to her in no other quality of heart or intellect.

In 1813, Mme. de Duras was induced to return to Paris and establish herself more permanently than heretofore, by the marriage of her eldest daughter,—a marriage which engrossed many of her thoughts, for she was enthusiastic even in her maternal devotion.

The Restoration caused her great joy, but she had her own ideas concerning it, and she was ere long to suffer keenly on its behalf, as we suffer for the loved and lost. Her circle of friends, however,—thanks to her more constant residence in Paris,—was all the time being enlarged and enriched. Not to mention the mere aristocrats and diplomats, nor M. de Chateaubriand, who was seldom seen in the evening, it numbered MM. de Humboldt, Cuvier, Abel Rémusat, Molé, de Montmorency, de Villèle, and de Barante. Towards M. de Villemain she felt herself drawn, no less by his marvellous talent for conversation, than by her sympathy with his moderate political opinions, which represented the nearest approach to liberalism possible to herself. M. de Talleyrand found in her salon a rejuvenated image of the circles of the Maréchale de Luxembourg and the Maréchale de Beauvau; but he used gracefully to complain of a certain want of maturity, and say that it would be necessary to wait fifteen years before the resemblance would be complete. Amid this extreme of outward worldly splendour, the health of Mme. de Duras was failing for several years before she altered her manner of life; but, in 1820, or thereabouts, she was obliged almost entirely to give up going out. Her soul retained its freshness of sensibility, its unflinching purity of passion. Her steadfast ardour only increased in view of disease and suffering. She resolved to bear these things; she accepted them; she loved them. But we shall presently revert to this fine side of her character.

Thus far we find no traces, in the life of Mme. de Duras, of any literary effort or intention of authorship. It was, in fact, by chance that she became an author. As late as 1820

she had, one evening, been telling, at some length, the true story of a young negress who had been brought up by the Maréchale de Beauvau, and her friends, fascinated by the narrative,—for she was an excellent story-teller,—asked her why she did not write out the history. The next morning the novel was half written. “Edouard” followed almost immediately; then two or three other short romances, that have never been published, but which will, we trust, appear at no distant day. Thus, by describing the sufferings of the soul, she strove to distract her attention from those of the body, shedding over every tender page she penned a reflection from those high consolations, towards which, in her secret heart, she was turning more and more each day.

The prevailing idea of “Ourika” and “Edouard,” and probably, also, of the other works of Mme. de Duras, is the idea of inequality either of nature or social position,—of obstacle or impediment between the heart’s desire and its mortal object; of some painful want, creating a kind of famine for tenderness,—the colour and deformity of Ourika, the birth of Edouard. Yet, in these victims of a devouring jealousy, generosity always triumphs. The author of these affecting tales loves to represent the unattainable,—to cause the hearts of her favourites, of the darlings of her own creation, to break for what cannot be. Only at the last does heaven open, and shed some drops of refreshing dew. While in the outer world Mme. de Duras never failed to wear an air of courteous concession, and readily yielded opinions, here in her writings she was fond of describing a sad and heart-rending antagonism. For all was struggle, suffering, desire, and disappointment, in the depths of this noble soul, ardent as the tropical climes in which her youth ripened, stormy as the seas furrowed by Kersaint. She was one of those who have infinite instincts, strong and impulsive yearnings; who are always asking of earth what it cannot give them; and who, in the frankness of their extravagant desires, strive, as the Abbé Prévost somewhere says, with a marvellous fervour of feeling, for objects whose attainment is doubtful; who aspire to the bliss of loving without stint

or limit; in whom grief always finds an easy prey; one of those wounded spirits that fling themselves unceasingly against the narrow bars of their fleshly prison.

The romances of "Ourika" and "Edouard" are, in our opinion, merely a delicate and reserved expression—a picture softened and modified for the eyes of the world—of that mysterious leaven of unrest always working in the breast of Mme. de Duras. Ourika, brought from Senegal, as Mlle. Aïssé was brought from Constantinople, received, as had the young Circassian, in her day, a finished education, but, less fortunate than she, she was not white. So, while Mlle. Aïssé, beloved by the Chevalier d'Aydie, refuses to marry him because she will not disgrace him, thus playing a part somewhat like Edouard's, poor Ourika, despised by Charles, who believes only in friendship, becomes the prey of a slow, consuming passion, whereof she herself remains unconscious until too late. Nothing can be more natural than the deep-seated and morbid feeling about her colour, once betrayed by Ourika. "I had removed all the mirrors from my chamber; I always wore gloves; my dress concealed my neck and arms. I wore, whenever I went out, a large hat and a veil, which I often kept on in the house. Alas! I did but deceive myself. I closed my eyes as children do, and fancied I could not be seen." The salon of the Maréchale de Beauvau is ravishingly described by the heiress of its style and traditions. The scenes of the Terror are faithfully portrayed. Inequality of rank, un-guessed passion, the constraints of society, the alternative of emigration or the guillotine,—all the favourite ideas of Mme. de Duras,—are here; the principal points of the circle are touched. And when Ourika has become a Gray Sister in a convent, and when, having chanced suddenly and inadvertently to quote Galatæa, she exclaims,—speaking of the image which so inveterately pursued her,—"It was that of the chimeras by which I had allowed myself to be beset. Thou hadst not then taught me, O my God, to exorcise these phantoms. I knew not that there is no rest save in Thee;"—when we find the narrative

interrupted by this simple outburst, we feel that the author has betrayed herself, and stands self-confounded ; that she has put her own thought into the mouth of this martyr.

“Edouard” is a more elaborate work than “Ourika,” and constitutes Mme. de Duras’s principal title to literary distinction. The scene is laid at about the same period as that of “Eugène de Rothelin ;” the characters are equally simple and pure ; the society perfectly elegant ; the type of lovers the most graceful ever conceived. But here we have no longer, as in Mme. de Souza’s charming production, an ideal of conduct and of happiness, and, as I believe I have elsewhere said, a sort of miniature “Saintré” or “Galaor” of the eighteenth century. Here are suffering and discord. The sense of social inequality is introduced. There is a trace of it in Eugène, also, where the hero is at first smitten by Agathe, the daughter of his good nurse. But conventionalism soon interferes triumphantly, and the happiness of all requires that it should be so. In “Edouard” the case is different,—grave and distressing. The young plebeian appears before the noble and modest Nathalie, with all the charm of his shyness, his solid attainments, his virgin sensibility, his manly brow not incapable of a blush. He is just what Hoche or Barnave will be, in the course of a few years. In “Edouard” we see two centuries, two orders of society, at war. The sorrow by which the lovers are smitten is the presage of a new era. It is curious to note the different effects produced by the same social catastrophes, as reflected in the writings of Mme. de Souza and Mme. de Duras. The first husband of the former and the father of the latter died upon the scaffold. Both were obliged to emigrate. But the ideas of one of these distinguished persons were, so to speak, formed, and her impressions for the most part stereotyped. When she came to describe the emigration and its sorrows, she did so from the point of the old social régime. “Adèle de Sénange” was composed before the Revolution, and appeared in 1793 ; but the tales that succeeded are not noticeably unlike it in tone. They are shadowed by no sad funereal tint. Eugène and Athanas

smile at happiness as if the Revolution were not to seize them in the course of a few years. All the tales of Mme. de Souza, except "Eugénie et Mathilde," belong to the eighteenth century, as viewed from the empire. The novels of Mme. de Duras are wholly of the Restoration. They contain the echo of a conflict not yet ended,—a suggestion of great catastrophes to come. One of her favourite ideas was, that the youth of those who were young during the Reign of Terror was blasted; that they had no proper youth, but would carry to the grave the traces of their early sorrows. This malady, which dates from the Terror, but which many other causes combined to induce, and which has been transmitted to all the subsequent generations,—this malady of Delphine and René,—she, too, suffers from it: she describes it minutely; she studies its varieties; she tries to find a cure for it in God. Her manner of introducing priests and convents marks, in the most trenchant manner, the difference between herself and Mme. de Souza. They are, as it were, divided, at this point, by the whole of the religious movement which produced the Genius of Christianity and the Meditations. The convent to Mme. de Duras is a genuine cloister, rigid, austere, expiatory. The priest reappears as a veritable confessor, "an old sailor," to quote Ourika, "acquainted with the tempests of the soul."

An analysis of "Edouard" would be in very poor taste, and we shall not attempt it. We may not take anything away from so complete a fabric, nor can it be embellished by our admiration. If it be true that there are a few books which tender and unoccupied hearts love to re-read once a year,—love to have flower periodically in the memory, like the lilacs and the hawthorn,—"Edouard" is assuredly one of them. Among all the scenes so admirably grouped and connected, the principal, central, and most striking of all,—the one where, on a summer evening, at Faverange, Edouard, while discussing the price of flour, perceives Mme. de Nevers on the balcony, her figure veiled by a mist of jessamine, her profile relieved against the blue sky; that scene where the flowers are presented and returned; that

scene of stifled tears and chaste confession,—realizes a youthful dream, which is reproduced in each successive generation. Nothing is wanting. Here are the choice surroundings which every young man imagines and invokes for his first declaration. Sentiment, delineation, language, all conspire to make up a page, sure to be adopted into countless romantic imaginations; a page which, had it appeared in the days of the “*Princesse de Clèves*,” when literature was less encumbered, could not have failed of immortality.

The style of Mme. de Duras, who attempted writing so late in life, and with no special preparation, is never either vague or careless. It is natural, but finished; simple, rapid, and yet reserved;—a style somewhat like Voltaire's, but feminine; no artifices, especially in “*Edouard*;” unflinching tact, at least in the choice of background and scenery; colour enough, and that positive; finally, outlines of the purest; everywhere a passion stronger than the words in which it is expressed, and no more trace of transport or extravagance than we meet in polite conversation.

While Mme. de Duras was devoting her mornings to the composition of these graceful tales,—whose smooth rind conceals a bitter sap,—she continued, notwithstanding the steady failure of her health, to receive and fascinate the world about her. Through her friendships and her powerful influence, she even bore, we suspect, a tolerably active part in the politics of her day. During the Congress of Verona, Chateaubriand wrote to her almost daily of what was transpiring, and the particulars of that mighty game. But at the same time, in the secret depths of her being, she was making a great struggle for religious submission and a pious temper. She had never been what is ordinarily called devout. She was led to the fountain-head by reflection, by solitary reaction, by the collective might of the sorrows that oppressed her. On the very day, in 1824, when an intimate friend surprised her in all the ardour of her opposition to M. de Villèle, holding in her hand Count Roy's pamphlet, justifiably incensed, and prophesying, by

that noble faculty of indignation which the world had never corrupted, the inevitable rupture with her eloquent friend,—on that self-same day, perhaps, she had been meditating in the morning over one of those Christian Reflections which she was then endeavouring to mature. Her instinctive political opinions betrayed her Girondist blood,—a generous enthusiasm, self-devoted, self-destroying, vain. When a friend remarked to her on the occasion of one of her impulsive outbursts, that she had a right to be thus liberal, being the daughter of M. de Kersaint, she exclaimed “Oh yes! poor father! He loved liberty as it should be loved. He did not go too far in the Revolution. He would gladly have defended Louis XVI.” She made a careful distinction between liberal ideas and revolutionary ideas, abhorring the latter and adoring the former. This—added to the habit of self-repression, and the ease of a woman of high fashion apt to seize an advantage—led to her complete conformity with the softened type of the Restoration.

Nevertheless, this too frank nature could not fail to receive wounds and shocks at a time of so much party irritation and social formality. She was spared neither envy nor hate. There was a prejudice against her, in certain fanatical circles, on account of the splendour of her salon, her liberal opinions, and the sort of people whom she was said to see. Her friends sometimes received odious anonymous letters. She could not be ignorant of these manœuvres, and she suffered on account of them, but strove to wean her spirit from a world where enmities are so active and where friendships are too apt to become cold and faithless. All her passions, humanly speaking, so noble; her excessive zeal, whether political or maternal; her partialities, the yearnings of a heart which aspired to clasp its loved ones too closely,—began slowly to subside into prayer and peaceful tears in the presence of her God. Her physical sufferings became, at intervals, excruciating, intolerable; but she accepted them meekly, she applied her whole mind to endurance. She conceived for suffering—if

one may venture to say so—a kind of last sublime passion. Amid the progressive decay of her organs, her heart seemed redoubling its youthful ardour, even to the end. And now, removed almost entirely from the world, encircled by the pious and perfectly unremitting care of her daughter, the Duchess de Rauzan,—sometimes at Paris, sometimes at Saint-Germain,—finally at Nice, where her death took place, in January 1829,—she was entirely absorbed in the solemn thoughts of immortality, accompanied, however, and nourished by the cares of a watchful, practical benevolence. Her other idolized daughter, the Countess de la Rochejacquelein, hastened to Nice, and was permitted to share in the last offices of affection, and to receive her mother's parting smile.

Among the brief "Reflexions Chrétiennes" traced by her own hand, we find fragments on the Passions, on Strength, and on Leniency. In the first, the title of which is "Watch and pray," we read :* "Almost all our moral griefs, almost all those heart-rendings which desolate our lives, might have been prevented if we had watched ; for then should we

* The manuscript works of Mme. de Duras were to have been—and, in accordance with her own expressed intention, certainly ought to be—published by M. Valery, whose fine taste qualified him, she thought, to appreciate them. We have felt justified, however, in giving some idea of the "Reflexions Chrétiennes," a copy of which we have seen, since these were not to have been included in the published works. A part of the Reflections and Prayers have, at length (1839), been printed ; but for some inconceivable reason the publication of the other MSS. seems to have been indefinitely postponed. The fruits of the intellect would seem to have their season, as well as those of the earth. We have retained, from a cursory perusal of these inedited works, the following thoughts :—

"There are beings from whom we feel ourselves separated, as it were, by the walls of glass described in fairy tales. We see each other, we converse, we approach, but we can never touch."

"It is with the maladies of the soul as with those of the body ; the most surely fatal are those which are born with us. There are—if one may venture on the expression—chronic despairs, akin to the bodily disorders, so called. They gnaw—they consume—they destroy ; but they do not confine you to your bed."

"Discord in the movements of the heart is as irritating as discord in music, and far more harmful."

never have given entrance to those passions, which are, all of them, even the perfectly legitimate, death to the body and the soul. Watchfulness is involuntary submission." And what a profound and melancholy meaning attaches to the following simple words on the lips of Mme. de Duras: "As we advance, our illusions vanish, and, one by one, we see removed all the objects of our affection. The charm of a fresh interest, change of feeling, inconstancy, ingratitude, death,—these things depopulate by degrees the world of enchantment, whereof we made an idol in our youth. To love God is to adore, at their source, the perfections which we hoped to find in His creatures, but which we have sought in them in vain. That fragment of good which we sometimes find in man, it is in God that we must love it." Farther on she invokes the fear of God as a spur to an inert and languid temper. She prays for energy, "for," she says, "the lack of energy is one of the greatest dangers of late conversions." But we shall best give an idea of her style as a Christian moralist, and of that tender subtlety which reveals the deepest workings of any feeling, by transcribing her meditation on Leniency.

LENIENCY.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"This word at once commands the exercise of leniency and assigns a reason for it. There are various ways of forgiving. All are good, because all are Christian; but these several methods differ among themselves as widely as the virtues out of which they spring. One forgives that he may be forgiven; another, because he feels that he deserves to suffer,—this is the forgiveness of humility; another still, on the principle of returning good for evil; but no one of these varieties of pardon includes an excuse for the pain inflicted upon ourselves. The pardon of Jesus Christ is the true Christian pardon. 'They know not what they do.' In these affecting words we find the excuse of the offender

and the consolation of the offended,—the only consolation possible under those moral griefs where the evil done us is, so to speak, only secondary. It puts the finishing touch of sorrow to be unable to find an excuse for those we love ; but here the explanation is offered : ‘They know not what they do.’ They have torn our hearts, but they knew not what they did. They were blind, their eyes were closed ; our very anguish is the pledge of their innocence. The human heart is pitiful. Great wrongs can only come of great darkness. Is it conceivable that one should inflict, voluntarily and in cold blood, those excruciating pangs which cause us to die a thousand deaths before our time ? Is it conceivable that you should be willing to break a heart that has cherished, adored, defended you for years ? For it is the nature of ingratitude—the source of our heaviest sorrows—to despise the tenderness bestowed upon it because incapable of returning it in kind. But in this very incapacity, in this very ignorance, lies the exculpation. To lavish affection on those who cannot return it, is like trying to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf. Forgive them, O my God, for they know not what they do. Forgive them without their having to reproach themselves, without accounting their pardon a virtue in me, for it is but just. But take pity on me, and teach me to love Thee only, and give me rest ! Amen.”

There is nothing to be added to words like these. But the different degrees of Christian pardon,—the first where we forgive that we may be forgiven ; that is, from motives of hope or fear : the second, where we forgive because we know that we deserve to suffer ; that is, from motives of humility : and, finally, the case where we forgive out of regard to the command to return good for evil ; that is, from obedience,—all these modes of pardon, which still fall short of the forgiveness that is thoroughly noble and disinterested, remind me of what we read in the “*Fathers of the Desert*,” as translated by Arnauld d’Andilly. “I once saw,” says an Abbé of Sinai, “three solitaries who had received the same injury. The first was troubled and

indignant; but still, because he feared divine justice, he held his peace. The second rejoiced on his own account at the evil treatment he had received, because he hoped to be compensated therefor, but was sorry for him who had committed the outrage. The third, thinking only of his neighbour's sin, was so moved by it—for he truly loved him—that he wept freely. Thus may we see, in these three servants of God, the working of three different motives: in one, the fear of punishment; in another, the hope of reward; in the last, the unselfish tenderness of a perfect love." And is it not wonderful to observe how, through all the ages, the Christian spirit maintains its integrity in those who possess it, conducting to well-nigh the same moral solutions and discriminations the aged Abbé of the Sinaitic convent and the great lady of our own day?

Such was the consummation of one of the most brilliant, complete, and appropriately diversified lives that can possibly be imagined—a life which reconciled the Restoration and the old régime; to which high birth, genius, and generosity imparted their charm; a life impassioned and yet pure, with a noble Christian end, such as we find in the records of the illustrious women of the seventeenth century,—an harmonious reflex of the finely-gifted lives and pious deaths characteristic of that era,—but deriving from the storms of the present a new impress, which gives a unique value to the whole.

Among the many persons whom it has been needful to consult, in the preparation of this notice, and from whom our own impressions and opinions have been derived, it is impossible not to particularize M. Villemain.

MADAME DE KRUDENER.*

IN those of our contemporaries whose productions have led us to a minute study of their characters, it is sometimes interesting to determine at what point the traits of previous ages predominate; to what social epoch it would be natural to refer them as to their true time. Speculations of this sort have their advantage if not carried too far; just as a picture is best appreciated by receding a little, and viewing it from different points, or causing it to be turned, raised, or lowered by degrees, until a true and deep perspective is attained. If, for instance, we have found that Mme. de Souza was purely of the eighteenth century, although her days were prolonged into our own, it has been equally evident that Mme. de Duras, while representing the finest aspect of the Restoration, did also, by virtue of her life, her elegant writings, her passionate reaction in favour of Christianity, and her death, recall some of the most affecting personal histories of the seventeenth century. And so to-day, as we approach Mme. de Krüdener, crowned with

* As a biography, this simple *pastel*, which deals with Mme. de Krüdener's mind and character, rather than with the facts of her life, is doubtless very imperfect. A friend of ours, M. Charles Eynard, who has already given us a biography of the celebrated physician Tissot, has long been preparing a complete history of Mme. de Krüdener. Private information, original letters, nothing will be wanting to the perfection of his work, especially in its religious portions; and we would gladly expedite its appearance in print (1846).

Since the above note was written, M. Eynard's life of Mme. de Krüdener has appeared, and furnished occasion for an article on our part, rectifying and correcting the author upon more points than one. The reader is referred to our "Derniers Portraits," the present sketch being left in its original form.

her mystic aureole, enveloped in a shining cloud, and smiling upon us from amid its dim white radiance, our thoughts and conjectures are at once carried back beyond our own and the two preceding centuries, and we do not hesitate to assign her a still earlier date. We see in her a mediæval saint,—a saint of the north and of the thirteenth century, some Elizabeth of Hungary, or sister to the grand master of the chevaliers *porte-glaive*. As such, — drawn Rhine-ward from the depths of her native Livonia, and long involved in the delights of the court, after inspiring with song the most illustrious minnesingers of the day, and herself composing a romance-poem in the character of a poet of the Wartburg (or, perhaps, in emulation of our own Chrestien of Troyes, or some other famous French troubadour, singing in what was then the most delectable of all languages), — she would have turned at last to penitence and God, renounced the flatteries and illusions that beset her, preached to Thibaut, consoled under calumny and converted Blanche, entered some order, which she would have sustained and reformed, and, like another Saint Clara in the train of some Francis of Assisi, would have drawn the people after her in crowds, and communed with the birds in desert places.

This, in short, is what Mme. de Krüdener would have been had she been able to fulfil her destiny. Instead, she was merely a charming novelist, and afterwards an *illuminé* at whom we can but smile. She missed the natural sequel to her part,—the willing and entire consecration of the remnant of her days to God, to the work of exhorting to holiness, to the salvation and regeneration of the world. But where was the remedy? She was born fully as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. The descendants of the Teutonic order had become Lutherans. A Lutheran, therefore, and also the wife of an ambassador, she had first to make trial of a worldly life, of scepticism and pleasure; and when she had escaped from these, and when the blaze of public events had kindled the fervid soul within her fragile body, and convinced her that the hour was come in

which to prophesy, to smite and heal by turns, she found that few would hear her, and that she was like the barren prophetess of Ilium in ashes. Those, even, whom her rapid and stirring eloquence had arrested for a moment, like the light dust raised by the electric cloud, relapsed when she was gone; and she herself—without fixed order, discipline, or tradition, borne aloft by the hot breath of calamity, catching only broken glimpses of the future, and soon losing trace of it altogether—perished in the distant Crimea, vainly, ineffectually, a snowflake driven by the northern wind, a flash, a cry amid the raging storm, and nothing more.

The latest period at which Mme. de Krüdener could possibly have found full employment for her faculties, and a perfectly congenial development, was the close of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century. She would then have been able, like Saint Theresa, and, at a later period, Mme. de Chantal, to lean for support against one of the firm pillars of the great and as yet unshaken edifice of Catholicism. She would have opened a new monastic route in the direction already indicated by saintly careers. In her dark and dizzy moments she would have had wise and experienced doctors of the soul at hand,—a Saint Francis de Borgia, a venerable Peter of Alcantara, a Saint Francis de Sales. It would not have been well for her to come later, not even in the days of the adorable Fénelon, who would have concurred too entirely in her opinions, and, it may be, fostered her chimeras.* But in our time what was she? Where were her guides? A whispering reed shaken by all conflicting winds, from whom could she receive the gentle breath of speech? I seek, but see not at her side, the shade even of a Fénelon. She has none but chance apostles. Plied with questions, pressed for her opinion on means and ends, symbol and legitimate

* No more ought Mme. de Krüdener to have lived too early in the thirteenth century, when the mystics were just beginning to preach the "eternal gospel." Her perilous imagination would have encountered one more snare in a system so akin to her dreams.

tradition, she pauses ; in the fulness of her soul she finds herself at fault, and turns inquiringly towards M. Empeytas.

But for us, who are to consider her chiefly with reference to her authorship of an exquisite book, her character is sufficiently rounded, and her destiny is the more romantic for being incomplete. Since she was not a saint, "Valérie" must remain her principal title to distinction, and, whether she will or no, the central achievement of her life. Let us, then, no longer attempt to remove her, in imagination, to a realm beyond our remotest horizon, but rather view her face to face, and discern what, in her actual lifetime, she was permitted to become.

Born at Riga, on the shores of the Baltic, at about the same time that Mme. de Staël was born in France, Mme. Juliana de Krüdener, a daughter of the Baron de Vietingoff, one of the great noblemen of the land, and member of a family which the Marshal de Munich had recently rendered famous, passed such a childhood as she has tearfully described in the reminiscences of Valérie. She was reared in the midst of wild but picturesque scenery. The lovely little lake, where the wind sometimes scattered the pine-cones from the forest, and over whose waters she gaily guided a fragile boat ; the mountain-ash trees, friendly to the birds ; the pyramidal firs, peopled with squirrels that admired their own reflection in the mirrored water ; the moaning sedges ; the moonlight on the white birch-stems, —such were the elements of that always beloved landscape, amid which began her innocent, and even then impassioned, reveries. The refinements of fashionable society soon enhanced the pleasures of her home. The high nobility of the north was, at that time, irresistibly attracted towards Paris, the Athens of art and pleasure. Princes and kings felt it an honour to have made a brief sojourn there, and to have been graduated as wits or freethinkers in that school. Their ambassadors were themselves among the most indispensable ornaments of French society and philosophy. Witness the distinguished standing of Baron de Gleichen,

ambassador from Denmark, and Baron de Creutz, ambassador from Sweden. The young Livonian came early to Paris, to a continuation of the social experience already begun. She was married, at the age of eighteen, to the Baron de Krüdener, a relative who, although still young, was somewhat older than herself, and with whom her principal concern seems to have been to paint a slightly idealized portrait of him in the Count, the husband of Valérie. Such was then the custom in high society. Your husband gave you a definitive name, a position, and a suitable and sufficient maintenance. He desired nothing more, and beyond that point no mention was made of him in the life of a celebrated woman. At most, one caught his profile, or the outline of his back, in some nook of her next romance. M. de Krüdener, Russian ambassador to divers European courts, introduced to them, successively, the subject of this memoir, who charmed and captivated all hearts wherever she went.

The incidents of her early life already seem very remote. She had attained the age of twenty when the French Revolution began, and had, as yet, no pretensions to literary fame. She was simply a woman of fashion. Of all the emotions which she must have felt and caused, by virtue of her graces, her sensibility, and her wit, the traces are as impalpable as herself. It would be wearisome and vain to seek them elsewhere than in "Valérie," which gathers, as it were, into a single mirror all their purest rays.

It does not appear that the first outbreak of the French Revolution deranged the life or altered the worldly bias of her who was to be so highly excited by its closing scenes. She was still at that happy age when our own passions, affections, and enjoyments are sufficiently noisy to make us deaf to all other sounds. The depths of her soul—to borrow an expression from Valérie—were like fountains whose murmur is lost amid the din of the day's activities, and becomes audible only with the approach of evening. In spite of 1789,—in spite even of 1793, when prophetic and biblical voices had already grown distinct, when Saint-Martin,

less obscure than formerly, was writing his "Eclaircissement," when De Maistre had hurled his first haughty menaces, and Mme. de Staël, while treating of sentiment, had yielded to bursts of potent political eloquence,—Mme. de Krüdener seems still to have seen a perpetual Athens in that Paris which she was finally to treat like Nineveh.

A letter, dated February 1793, and written from Leipsic, to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, proves only that great personal sorrow—her father's death, and perhaps some secret anguish of another sort—had combined with the climate of Livonia to induce a derangement in her nervous organization, which had continued for the fourteen previous months, but from which she was at length beginning to rally. "The fever," she says, "which consumed my blood has disappeared; my brain is no longer affected as it has been; and the soul agitated by such bitter sorrows, such terrible storms, is once more accessible to hope and the influences of nature. Yes, nature once more affords me sweet comfort and gentle diversion. She is no longer shrouded in a funereal veil. When I recovered my memory and resumed the exercise of my faculties, my thoughts flew to you.* How is it with you in this hour of universal calamity?" This word is the only allusion to public events in the whole letter. M. de Krüdener was then ambassador to Denmark. She, with the concurrence of her husband, was residing at Leipsic for the education of her son. But the first glance of her awakened moral sense fell upon the author of *Paul and Virginia*, the future sister of Valérie, and upon Paris.

She returned thither, after numerous journeyings about Europe, in 1801, at the moment of the declaration of peace and the brilliant restoration of society and letters. She was still quite young, and always beautiful,—a small, pure blonde,—delighting the eye by her grace, with deep blue

* This expression, as applied to her simple relations with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, betrays some degree of excitement on the part of Mme. de Krüdener. With a really great writer and poet, we can imagine that she might have shown herself a true daughter of the North, like Lili, the Countess de Bernstorff, and Bettine, those objects of Goethe's enthusiastic regard.

orbs, and the extremely fair hair peculiar to Valérie. Her voice was low, her speech musical and sweet, the charm of all Livonian women. Her toilets were singularly adapted to her style. She was always composing them in imagination, and some of their secrets have escaped her. Witness the shawl-dance and the ball-costume in that scene where a wreath of blue mallows is placed upon the golden hair of Valérie. So I always see her in my fancy, swiftly entering some splendid soirée, to the sound of Garat's music, all heads turning at her airy footfall. It must have been like a vision of Music herself!

It was at Paris, where "René" had just appeared, and at Berlin, whither she soon returned, and where she received by every courier boxes of fresh finery, while Mme. de Staël was publishing "Delphine" in France, that Mme. de Krüdener gathered up her already dim reminiscences, and possibly, also, some pages which she had previously written, and set about composing "Valérie."

The work appeared in the year XII. (1804), at Paris, and anonymously. While Mme. de Staël, who was then at the height of her celebrity,—having been enthusiastically welcomed by the French school of the eighteenth century, was beginning to turn her attention towards Germany, Mme. de Krüdener, a German, overlooked the already glorious literature of her own country, and had eyes for ours alone. She gave us a gem of a book in this her favourite language, her style being that of the La Fayettees and the Souzas, enriched by a skilful admixture of northern tints. After "Saint-Preux," "Werther," and "René," she was able to retain her individuality, to be both of our country and of hers, and to blend with the genuine French manner something of her own Scandinavian melancholy. Gustave, in the height of his amorous delirium, wrote in his diary, "I have with me a few favourite authors,—the odes of Klopstock, Gray, and Racine. I read them little, to be sure; but they give me dreams of a different life." Note the order—Klopstock, tempered by Gray, and especially by Racine. In "Valérie," more than with Mme. de

Staël even, the Germanic inspiration, sentimental as it is, finds chastened expression,—is subdued, so to speak, by unfailing good taste, and acquires a certain French unobtrusiveness of form. What might originally have become an ode of Klopstock, we should render by some few tones in the language of Berenice.

“Delphine” is undoubtedly a work full of power, and passion, and eloquent detail; but, as a whole, it leaves much to be desired, and produces upon the reader, at the time of its perusal, a baffling and confused impression. Those books, on the contrary, which faithfully develop their own leading thought, the reading whereof affects the mind like a single picture finished to its last detail, without slip of the pencil or muddling of the tints,—such books, whatever their size, have a transcendent value as works of art, for they are complete in themselves. I read the other day, in a collection of unpublished thoughts, “The poetic faculty is nothing more nor less than the gift and the art of exhibiting each real feeling in its flower, from the royal lily and the dahlia, down to the Easter daisy.” What is here said of poetry may properly be applied to any effort of creative composition, which reflects its author’s *beau-idéal*. “Eugène de Rothelin” is, of course, a picture of smaller dimensions, and, if you will, of narrower range, than “Delphine;” but, in its own style and degree, it is a masterpiece. A rivulet, bright with jewelled waves, slipping between fair banks, over a bed of fine sand and beneath a transparent sky, has its own value to the painter’s eye, and a beauty superior to that of the mighty river unequal in its movement, and, at intervals, turbid and foamy. Referring to the masters, we find that Jean Jacques, in recommending for its subtle heart-analysis the fourth part of the “Nouvelle Héloïse,” did not disdain to compare it with the “Princesse de Clèves,” which he had evidently taken for his own model. He was right, and to this very day the latter is, perhaps, a more pleasing, if not a more potent book than the former. In the same manner, “Eugène de Rothelin,” “Valérie,” and “Adolphe” are

works whose quality and value are disproportionate to their volume. "Valérie," moreover, is not inferior, in the order of its ideas and sentiments, to any of our more elaborate fictions, while it excels in the unstudied preservation of natural proportions and a genuine unity. As a whole, like the person of its author, it has infinite grace.

While conforming in parts to an ephemeral and now obsolete taste, "Valérie" has its points of permanent value. In the walks of fiction there have been writers of remarkable talent, who have had but a temporary success; whose productions, though extolled for a time, have been forgotten before many years. Mlle. de Scudéry and Mme. Cottin, despite the wit of the one and the pathos of the other, are quite gone by. No motive, save one of curiosity to discern the style of our mothers' sensibility, would ever induce us to reopen one of their volumes. The same is true of Mme. de Montolieu. "Caroline de Litchfield," which so captivated us at fifteen, can no more be re-read than "Claire d'Albe." "Valérie," on the other hand, holds a permanent place, and is always affecting. It is one of those books which a man may read thrice at different stages of his life.

The plot of the story is very simple, and resembles that of "Werther." A young man becomes enamoured of his friend's wife. But here, beneath all ideal disguises, we are conscious of a singular realism, lending a life to the narrative which is quite its own. Werther would have killed himself if he had not loved Charlotte. He would have died for the infinite, the absolute, — for nature. Gustave dies for the love of Valérie alone. The first half of the story is entirely occupied with the origin of his love, its growth, and the pure emotions which help to fan its flame. Varied scenes and graceful images reveal and illustrate most happily this presence of a stormy, devouring passion, beside an innocent, ignorant friendship. Take the scene at Venice, at the ball in the Villa Pisani. Gustave had not attended, but in passing a pavilion he hears the sound of music, and climbs a great flower-vaso to obtain a view through the window. There he sees from

without Valérie's marvellous shawl-dance, and, intoxicated by her aspect as she approaches the window, he fastens his lips to the pane which is touched, inside, by her beloved arm. He seems to breathe torrents of fire; but she feels nothing—heeds nothing. What a perfect type of their destinies,—and of many others more or less like theirs! One little sheet of glass between them; but raging flames on the one side and only kindly indifference on the other! So, too, when, on the day of Valérie's *fête*, the Count begins to chide her, Gustave sends a child to bear her his congratulations, and thus remind her husband that she is not to be vexed on such a day. Valérie is moved. She kisses the little one, and sends him back to Gustave, who, stooping to kiss his cheek upon the same spot, finds there—a tear. “Oh, Valérie,” he says within himself, “tears are the only gift or message possible from thee to me!”* This

* This child, the innocent bearer of a kiss and a tear, reminds us of a little poem by the German minnesinger Hadloub, translated by M. Marmier (“Revue de Paris,” April 2, 1837), and also of that fragment of André Chénier's, probably of Greek origin, “J'étais un jeune enfant qu'elle était grande et belle.” Note the variations in the idea and its progress. In André Chénier's imitation of a Greek epigram we have merely the image of the proud beauty and the abashed rivals. In Hadloub, the prominent idea is that of the grief of the timid and reverential lover, who seeks the adored traces of his lady's lips. The love of chivalry, whose consummation was attained in Petrarch, is here for the first time disclosed. But the tear upon the little cheek in “Valérie” suggests a different thought from either of the others. Here is a version of Hadloub's piece, with this last idea added. It is in the style of the sixteenth century, slightly modernized, and we may suppose it to have been versified by Clotilde de Surville, the neighbour of Ronsard and Baif, or, better still, by Mary Stuart:—

Vite me quittant pour elle,
 Le jeune enfant qu'elle appelle
 Proche son sein se plaça.
 Elle prit sa tête blonde,
 Serra sa bouchette ronde,
 O, malheur! et l'embrassa.

Et lui, comme un ami tendre,
 L'enlaçoit d'un air d'entendre,
 Ce bonheur qu'on me défend.

constant sense of separation and sorrow, the nuptial ring which he feels upon Valérie's finger whenever he takes her

J'admirois avec envie,
Et j'aurois donné ma vie
Pour être l'heureux enfant.

Puis elle aussitôt sortie,
Je pris l'enfant à partie,
Et me mis à lui poser,
Aux traces qu'elle avoit faites.
Mes humbles lèvres sujettes :
Même lieu, même baiser.

Mais quand j'y cherchois le bême
Et le nectar de son âme,
Une larme j'y trouvai.
Voilà donc ce que m'envoie,
Ce que nous promet de joie,
Le meilleur jour echevé.

Or thus, in what is rather a paraphrase than a translation :—

"Come, my child," my lady said:
Swift from me to her he sped
Nestled near her lovingly;
O'er his golden hair she yearned,
And his rosebud mouth upturned,
Softly kissed—alas, for me!

Even he, his small arms twining
Round her neck, seemed half divining
The great bliss to me denied;
I, methought, my all would give
Such sweet welcome to receive
As I enviously eyed.

Straight she left us two alone;
Then I called the little one
To my side, intent to place,
Following her gracious sign,
These adoring lips of mine
Where her lips had left their trace.

Here I thought to breathe the whole
Balm and fragrance of her soul;—
Stooping I beheld a tear!
Suddenly my heart grew light,
Reading there a promise bright,
And a hope of coming cheer.

hand, reappears under a new aspect in each affecting scene. The portrait of Valérie is constantly recurring in all sorts of situations and attitudes, smiling, sad, variable, fondly reflected, as it were, in a thousand faithful mirrors.

The second volume is marked by some of the faults peculiar to the Romanesque style. I fancy I can detect the point at which invention begins. The winding up of one of these heart-histories, founded upon memory, is hardly ever natural. They are half, or, perhaps, three-fourths true; but they must be drawn to an imaginary conclusion, and it requires extreme care to prevent them from assuming an air of improbability. The hero must die to all intents and purposes, whereas, in reality, he is living, half cured, at Baden or Geneva. There is a scene in the second part, where Gustave, in a perturbed interview with Valérie, just before he is to leave her, suddenly receives a wound in the forehead, while leaning against a window,—a somewhat fallacious and conventional wound,—since the most delicate of lovers could hardly get a hurt in this way. Shortly afterwards he passes, in the night, through the chamber where Valérie is calmly sleeping, and, moved by an irresistible desire to gaze on her once more, he hears her murmur, in her dream, the words “Gustave” and “death.” This, again, is the official dream of fiction,—a pure sentimental fib of the year 1803. Happily, however, the situation of Gustave soon resumes its reality. One of the finest passages in the book is the scene in the gondola, where Valérie, when slightly startled, lays Gustave’s hand familiarly upon her heart, but when seriously alarmed, flings herself into the arms of the Count. “Then, indeed, I realized my utter insignificance, and the gulf that lay between us.” When Gustave has gone away alone with his wound into the mountains; when, throughout the autumn months that precede his death, he yields himself desperately to the intoxicating influence of the wild winds and his own reveries; when he becomes almost a René,—how distinct an individual he still remains, by virtue of that graceful image of the almond

tree, to which he compares himself,—the almond exiled to an ungenial clime, yet bearing flowers for the wind to scatter adown the precipice! What a picture is here of soft and fragile youth on the brink of an abyss!—of a tender, mystical, Ossianesque nature, allied to Swedenborg, prone to self-sacrifice,—of a youth like René, mature beyond his years, who has never known the mood of youth, nor its pleasures, nor its faults, but whom the Count has simply convicted, in words less severe than those of Father Aubrey to Chactas, of those tender affections which constitute the beauty of our lives, and, collectively, underlie all our virtues and all our sensibility. Gustave, who, at times in his dreamy solitude, is also very like Werther,—who even equals the eloquent and poetic utterances of the latter in that species of hymn where he exclaims, “I wander over the hills perfumed with lavender,”—Gustave maintains his absolute individuality, rejecting the idea of suicide; pious, innocent, and pure, even in his derangement; giving thanks in the midst of his despair. In a word, Gustave actually succeeds in leaving with the reader—as it was his dearest wish to leave with Valérie—“a few tears only.” His memory is of those who endure for a lifetime, and honour such as are formed to cherish them.

M. Marmier, the author of an appreciative article on Mme. de Krüdener, has acutely remarked the presence, in “Valérie,” of certain profoundly religious thoughts, affording glimpses of the future woman beneath the veil of her youthful elegance. I, too, will cite a few prophetic passages.

“Her delicate frame is a flower, which would bow to the lightest breezes; her high, courageous spirit would face death for virtue or for love.”

“‘No,’ I continued, ‘beauty is never overpowering save when it illustrates something less transitory than itself; when it turns the thought upon those things which will constitute the enduring charm of life when the brief moment of seduction shall have passed away. The soul must discern it when the senses have grown dull.’”

“ ‘You know, my friend,’ said Gustave, ‘that I cannot help loving men. In general I believe them to be estimable. Were it otherwise, would not society have been subverted long ago? Order subsists in the universe; therefore virtue is stronger than vice. But the great world, the class that wealth, ambition, and grandeur separate so widely from the rest of humanity,—the world of fashion,—seems to me like an arena bristling with lances, where a wound may be apprehended at every step. Scorn, selfishness, vanity,—these natural enemies of whatever is fair and noble,—mount constant guard at the entrance of this arena. They proclaim laws which hamper all those generous and kindly impulses whereby the soul is elevated and made better, and, because better, happier. I have often pondered on the causes of the fact that all the denizens of this great world come finally to detest each other, and almost always die calumniating life. There are few villains; those whom conscience does not restrain, society does. Honour—the haughty and fastidious offspring of virtue,—honour keeps the avenues of the heart, and repels low and base actions, as the native instincts repel atrocious ones. Taken separately, have not all men some virtuous qualities? Whence comes, then, this throng of injurious vices? Is indifference to good the most dangerous of all immoralities?’ ”

It is evident that Mme. de Krüdener here substitutes her own experience for that of Gustave, and these sentences have all the gravity of her subsequent predictions. The sin against which she here testifies is that not of the great world merely, but of the whole world; it is that sin of Pilate which Dante punished with a tepid inferno, and which, in our own day, so many generous innovators, beginning with herself, have grown weary of denouncing.

The style of “Valérie,” like the scenes which it portrays, takes at times a false colouring from the prevalent sentimentalism of the day. It is not agreeable to have the Count send, for his son’s grave, a tablet of Carrara marble,—“rosy as youth, and veined with black like life.” But these faults of taste are rare, and so are certain vicious

idioms, which might be corrected by one stroke of the pen. As a whole, the style of this delightful book is excellent, inclining slightly to severity. It is harmony, rhythm, vivacity of movement, and a perpetual and perfect command of the French idiom.

The success of "Valérie" in the highest French and German circles was prodigious. In that mass of interminable rubbish entitled "Mélanges militaires, littéraires, et sentimentaires," by the Prince de Ligne, we find a continuation of "Valérie," which is merely a burlesque by that man of wit, too much addicted to fashionable scribbling. The fascinating Princess Serge Galitzin having, as he says, been unable to sup with him because she was so afflicted by the perusal of "Valérie," he was fain to remove that obstacle for the morrow by sending her a consoling sequel, in which Gustave returns to life. It is a parody whose slight flavour has long since evaporated. Moreover, the poetical world of Germany cherished a grudge against Mme. de Krüdener for deserting her native language and adopting ours,—even Goethe having expressed his regret that a woman of so much talent should have gone over to France.

However, the Teutonic movement of reaction against France, or at least against the man who held France in his hand, was soon to gain the support of Mme. de Krüdener, and hasten the adoption of her ultimate character. Even in "Valérie" there is a trace of hostility to the first consul, where the Count alludes to those pictures and statues which must be seen beneath their own skies, in Italy itself, and which it would be preposterous to remove. After the murder of the Duke d'Enghien her dislike became indignation, and her residence in Berlin, her intimacy with the Queen of Prussia, and the events of 1806, completed the work. It must have been, I think, at about this time in Sweden, in the midst of a still brilliant existence, but at the age when youth is flying beyond recall, that a revolution was wrought in the mind of Mme. de Krüdener. "A ray of divine grace"—to use her own words—had touched

her, and she embraced religion, but with a lingering admixture of human motives, and not yet in the positive and prophetic character which she afterwards assumed. In the second volume of Mlle. Cochelet's * *Memoirs* there occurs, amid pages of platitudes, an admirable letter, which decisively indicates the point to which this marvellous soul had then advanced. She had not begun to prophesy, but she already besieged her friends with the zealous exhortations of a saintly concern. Her Christian influence over the Queen of Prussia, her boundless devotion to that sad and heroic sufferer, and the blessed consolations and heavenly hopes which she imparted; are sufficiently well attested. It seems that she had even then composed other works, which were never published. She quotes, in this letter to Mlle. Cochelet, a certain "Othilde," in which she had attempted to portray the chivalrous piety of the middle age. "Oh, how you would enjoy this book!" she naïvely exclaims. "I had help from Heaven in writing it,—and this is why I dare affirm that it has beauties." In thus reverting to the mediæval era,—to the pious days of the Teutonic crusaders,—Mme. de Krüdener seems instinctively to have sought her native sphere.

The great Tasso, who, like our heroine, had a sensitive imagination, and was subject to illusions, might, I should think, have furnished her some harmonious tints for the picture which she essayed to paint; and the colours in which this "Othilde" was conceived and portrayed were, I fancy, those of a baptized Clorinda.

Mme. de Krüdener spent these years of her transition state in wandering over Germany,—now at Baden, where she experienced reactions towards the world, now visiting the Moravian Brotherhood, now listening at Carls-

* The "Semeur" for October 1843 devotes two articles to Mme. de Krüdener, which naturally dwell upon her religious and mystical side. We ourselves had treated this aspect of her character seriously, but the worthy author of these articles regards it with intense solemnity, and reproves us severely for our one faint smile. He cites the letters to Mlle. de Cochelet,—not merely this of 1809, but others from the same volume. The curious in this matter will find them there.

rhue to the *illuminé* Jung Stilling, or preaching with him to the poor.* She struggled to rise higher,—to free herself more and more from the ideas of those whom, in her new phraseology, she styled “the men of the torrent;” but she altered less than she supposed. If it be allowable to say, as some have done, of the conversion of certain gentle souls, “it is love still,”—the expression would seem to have been framed on purpose for her. Into these new ways of hers, which, following Plato, she denominated the “soul’s royal route,” she brought all the sensibility and imaginative tenderness of her earlier mood, and all the fascination of her earlier manner. Her inexhaustible desire of pleasing was transformed into a vast need of loving, or rather, it never deserted her.†

The events of 1813 disclosed in complete and luminous outline the mission which Mme. de Krüdener imagined herself to have received; and that movement of regenerated Germany which produced so many enthusiastic warriors, national poets, and eloquent pamphleteers, determined her rank also as the evangelical Velléda and prophetess of the North. Aside from the peculiarities of her religious character, what specially distinguishes the part played by Mme. de Krüdener from that of other Teutonic enthusiasts, is her strong reliance upon the extreme North,—upon Russia, or,

* Some details of Mme. de Krüdener’s residence in the Grand Duchy of Baden may be read in the introduction to the tenth volume of M. Bignon’s “History of France under Napoleon,” p. 5 et seq.

† We are reminded of the following anecdote. A distinguished man, who visited her often in the years succeeding her conversion, was smitten with the charms of her daughter, who was like her, only young. At last he opened his heart, and spoke to the mother of the hopes he had dared to cherish. Mme. de Krüdener, during his long and somewhat embarrassed statement, had listened in silence, or mechanically answered “Yes,” but when the name of her daughter was at length pronounced, she suddenly fainted. She thought he had been speaking of herself. However, if we would fairly appreciate the remnant of facile romance which lingered with Mme. de Krüdener in the first years of her conversion, and also the perfect propriety which she always preserved amid her worldly inconsistencies, we must not forget the peculiar mingling in her character of Livonian levity and Livonian purity, which explains the whole.

as she says, the people of the North Wind,—all which she reconciles in her heart with an ardent love of France. Her excited imagination seeks that whereby civilisation is to be renewed and regenerated, beyond the confines even of ancient Germany, in what was once an ice-bound desert, but has now, in her view, become the reservoir of lost purity. What she invokes, and depicts by contrast in her visions, is the reverse and counterpart of Attila's irruption—a northern invasion for the salvation of the world.

She passed, during the year 1814, from Paris to Switzerland, thence to Baden and the valley of Lichtenthal, where the poor whom she had fed and comforted thronged her footsteps; thence again to Alsatia and Strasburg, where she witnessed the tragical but Christian death of the prefect, M. de Lézai-Marnésia,* and afterwards to the village of the Banc-de-la-Roche in the Vosges, enlightened and leavened by the spirit of Oberlin. All that she saw became part of her hallucination, and increased it. She had, as yet, no personal acquaintance with the Emperor Alexander, although she had already named him the Universal Deliverer, and the White Angel, in contradistinction to the Black Angel, Napoleon. The mere thought of the latter—his very shade—would induce, whenever mentioned, the sacred vertigo of the priestess. She foretold to all she met his escape from the Island of Elba, and the calamities that would be unchained thereby. She had fixed her mind upon the year 1715, and assigned to that near date the approaching catastrophe, and subsequent regeneration of the earth.

1815, since it partially justified her predictions, increased

* Adrien, Count de Lézai-Marnésia, celebrated as a political writer, and exiled, on the 18th of Fructidor, for his open opposition to the Directorial government, was connected by marriage with the Beauharnais family, and subsequently found a powerful protector in Josephine. In 1806 he was appointed prefect of the district of the Rhine and Moselle, and in 1810 prefect of the Lower Rhine. His administration was a model of mildness and justice, and greatly enhanced the prosperity of Strasburg. He was thrown from his carriage in the streets of that city, dragged for some distance at the heels of the horses, and so frightfully injured that he died on the 9th of October 1814.—TR.

her faith and realized her dream of political influence. She had seen the Emperor Alexander in Switzerland, just before the Hundred Days, and had found in him a docile nature. The prince in question had already been compared to the other Alexander and to Cyrus. She went farther, and compared him to Jesus Christ. She was perfectly sincere, no doubt ; but a lingering remnant of address, of the world's insinuating flattery, is perceptible here, and it did her no harm. Her ascendancy from the first was immense. As soon as Alexander arrived in Paris, she became his constant adviser.* Several times each day he used to quit the *Elysée-Bourbon* by a garden gate, and visit her at her lodgings, where they united in a prayer for spiritual illumination. She confessed to a friend at that period, that it was sometimes difficult for her to repress a thrill of vanity, when she reflected that she was all-powerful with the most powerful of sovereigns. Early in September of that year, a grand review of Russian troops was held in Alexander's presence, on the plains of Vertus, in Champagne. Mme. de Krüdener, with her party, her daughter, her son-in-law, and her spiritual director, the young minister Empeytas, had taken rooms in the *château Mesnil*, close by. In the morning the emperor's carriage was sent for her, and the honours paid by Louis XIV. to Mme. de Maintenon in the camp of Compiègne did not surpass the veneration with which the conqueror treated her. It was not the granddaughter of his favourite subject, Marshal Munich, it was an ambassadress of Heaven,—whom he received and conducted into the presence of his armies. Bareheaded,—save for a straw hat, which she laid aside at pleasure,—her fair

* In 1814, Alexander had been under the influence of his excellent tutor, General de La Harpe,—an influence purely liberal, with the liberality of 1789 and the year III. In 1815, when he passed under the sway of Mme. de Krüdener, he seemed far less liberal to our French patriots,—to M. de La Fayette, for instance, who notes the metamorphosis in his *Memoirs*. Yet even then, in his second phase of charitable, Christian mystic, how much more of the love of freedom he displayed, than was the case when that mood, too, had passed away!

hair parted and falling over her shoulders, with a few stray curls gathered up and fastened in the middle of her forehead, clad in a long, dark robe, confined, after the fashion of the day, by a simple girdle, and rendered elegant by her manner of wearing it,—such was the aspect of our heroine on this occasion ; so she arrived upon the plain at dawn ; and standing upright while prayer was offered, she confronted the prostrate troops like a new Peter the Hermit. She wrote and published at the time, under the title of the “*Camp of Vertus*,” a little pamphlet on this imposing ceremony. The depth of her emotion and the magnificence of her desires are better expressed in her own language than by any interpretation of ours.

“Who then present * in the plains of Champagne but would have said that he beheld the defeat of Attila? Has another rod been broken? . . . There has never been but one crime,—that, namely, of desiring to do without the living God. Happy Alexander! How fully must the vast desire of thy heart have been answered, when thou sawest, on that heavenly day, in those plains, where, six centuries ago, in presence of a king of Navarre, † a hundred thousand Frenchmen beheld, by the glare of funeral torches, the torture of four-and-twenty heretics,—when thou sawest there, I say, a hundred thousand Russians doing homage to the religion of love! Ah, who that saw that divine day but shared in all our hopes? Who but thought, as he beheld Alexander beneath the great banners, of all the triumphs of faith and all the lessons of charity? Who dared doubt the reality of inspiration from on high? Who

* Here we have a solecism in language. To be present is never used absolutely. The author of “*Valérie*,” after she became a seer and a divine instrument, grew very careless in her style. Saint Paulinus, after he was converted, allowed, and in fact imposed upon himself, all manner of inaccuracies in his verse.

† Probably Thibaut de Champagne, who was concerned in the severities against the Albigenses, the Jews of Orleans, and the Shepherd Boys. There is a tradition in that district of the torture of twenty-four heretics, who perished upon Mount Aimé, which overlooks the plains. Until within a few years a tower has marked the spot.

but said with the apostle, 'The former things are passed away ; lo, all things are become new' ?

"And who but felt the need of something new in the midst of so many ruins ? Men pre-eminent by their sagacity discerned this day in the light shed over it by the majestic Scriptures. Nature confided it to her observers. Science doubted. Politics, overwhelmed with shame, foresaw in it the day of destruction. . . .

"Yea, all, whether rejoicing in the great secret, as yet veiled like Isis, or trembling with apprehension lest the veil of the future should be rent,—all have looked to this epoch either with confidence or dread. . . .

"What heart, in view of these things, has not throbbed for thee also, O France ! once so great, and destined to arise yet greater from thy disasters ?—France, who has banished the Almighty from thy councils, and then seen the arm of flesh, although stayed upon empires, fall trembling, and relapse into impotency. . . .

"Say to the astonished peoples that the French have been chastised for their glory. Say to the men without a future, that the dust which is whirled aloft returns to the earth, and is mingled with its graves. . . .

"And thou France of the olden time, ancient heritage of the Gauls, daughter of Saint Louis and of so many other saints, who shed upon thee everlasting benedictions, home of chivalry whose dreams have entranced the universe,—arise intact, for thou art living and immortal ! Thou art no captive in the chains of Death, like those who have reigned or served in the domains of Evil only."

She ends by pointing to the cross left on the spot like a stately altar, the rallying-point of all, which seems to say, "Here Christ was adored by the heroes and the army dear to His heart ; and here the people of the North Wind will require the happiness of France."

These pages clearly show how Mme. de Krudener conceived the mission of the Holy Alliance ; but her vision, as well as the momentary dream of Alexander, was soon brought to confusion, and vanished before the conflicting

interests and positive ambitions of those who made light of such noble chimeras. The species of triumph achieved by Mme. de Krüdener at the camp of Vertus marks the highest point, the bright culmination, so to speak, of her influence. A feeling of serious alarm began to be manifested, and attempts were made to alienate the emperor from her, and to insure his seeing her less frequently. After Alexander had quitted France, Mme. de Krüdener's powers rapidly declined, and the pious veneration she had excited in his mind ended in aversion, and even persecution.

Those who seriously believe in the intervention of Providence in the affairs of this world, should not judge too superciliously the mission and the attempt of Mme. de Krüdener. It is certain that 1815 was a decisive epoch; and to religious minds it may well have appeared that the crisis was grave enough to demand a mystical witness and a prophet. Mme. de Krüdener herself was not so much deceived about the importance of 1815 as about its anticipated consequences. In these moments of universal crepitation, it may, I fancy, occasionally come to pass that rapid glimpses of the ideal hidden behind this sensible cosmos are revealed to the eyes of some, causing such to believe its advent near. But the rift soon closes, and the eye which for an instant had seen clear and far, still believing in the vanished radiance, is deceived and filled with its own light only. The mistake of Mme. de Krüdener has been the misfortune of many souls. It was merely that of conceiving, at a certain awful and critical juncture in human affairs, the blessed solution which a truly great man might have effected. But the great man did not appear, and the prophet of his mission remained a simple visionary. We, too, are dreamers; and do we not daily repeat, "How would it have been in 1830, if we had had a great heart at the helm? If the noble and interesting but fragile Alexander had been a veritable Charlemagne, a monarch equal to his fortune, Mme. de Krüdener had been more than justified; but, in that case, would she have been necessary? Her crowning delusion lay in the belief that thoughts like hers

may be suggested or infused, where they have not occurred spontaneously.

After all, what Mme. de Krüdener did was merely this: in her own peculiar fashion, and in language vaguely biblical, but moved by a new and keen sense of apprehension, she long ago, from the very midst of the political hurricane, discerned and decried that plague of modern scepticism, indifference, and spiritual destitution, which, with more or less of authority, genius, extravagance, and personal risk, has been proclaimed, palliated, aggravated, deplored, and attacked, in turn, by all those who have been variously aiming at a grand regeneration of the world,—by Saint-Martin, de Maistre, Saint-Simon, Ballanche, Fourier, and La Mennais.

Aside from Mme. de Krüdener's political influence at Paris in 1815, her purely religious action was extremely transitory, but powerful and impressive while it lasted. All who approached her were, to some extent, subjugated by the charm of her address, and caught the fragrance of her rich and open soul. Of this many examples might be adduced. Mme. de Lézai-Marnésia, a beautiful young woman, who had seen her husband die a frightful death at Strasburg, fled in her anguish to Mme. de Krüdener, and shared her mattress nightly, in the hope of recovering, through her, communication with the lost one, he having already appeared to her more saintly and spiritual friend. In the château which she occupied near the camp of Vertus, all the persons about Mme. de Krüdener assumed more or less of her habits of exhortation. Her daughter and son-in-law preached to the family of the aged gentleman with whom they lodged; her very maid preached to the old castle domestic. Some casual expression, let fall no matter where or upon what subject, served as a text, and a conversation, whether it were being held at the castle entrance, or on the staircase, or in the doorway of a room, was transformed into a sermon. Yet the species of respect and admiration she inspired counteracted the impression produced by her surroundings. Many a Parisian scoffer, going

to hear her in the great drawing-room in the Rue Saint-Honoré, which was open to all, returned, if not convinced, at least thoroughly subdued by her personal magnetism. Those of her familiar acquaintances who felt themselves capable of resisting her doctrines while in her presence, fell into something resembling her own strain of exhortation as soon as she was away. There was a peculiarly admirable quality, a kind of overflowing plenitude, in her eloquence, when she spoke of the sorrows of the great. "Ah! but I have dwelt in palaces," she said to one young girl, a worthy listener; "and if you did but know the trouble and anguish they conceal! I never see one without feeling a pang at my heart." But when she spoke to the poor of those miseries of the rich, which even their own do not surpass, her words possessed a special and sovereign efficacy. Once, at Paris, having been earnestly solicited by a good man, M. de Gerando, she made her way, with the permission of the prefect of police, into the prison of Saint Lazarus, and there found herself face to face with the very dregs of society. She spoke to those amazed and soon deeply-affected women. The corruption of the great was laid bare. She smote her breast. She confessed herself as great a sinner as they all. She spoke to them of that God, "who," as she often said, "had snatched her from the delights of the world." She continued for hours, producing an unlooked-for and ever-increasing effect. There were sobs and bursts of gratitude. When she left, the doors were besieged, and the corridors double-lined. They made her promise to return, to send them good books. But other emotions supervened, and she never went again. It is this inconsequence in action which makes us sensible of Mme. de Krüdener's lack of fixed order and discipline, and even of definite doctrine.

Many a time, when plied with questions concerning that doctrine, when pressed to declare its source and adduce its proofs, when her mystical utterances were met by the inquiry, "Who are you? whence come you?" she was content, after the first few words, to make a gesture towards

Empeytas, who replied, "I will explain all that presently;" and then the wind of inspiration veered, and the explanation was never given.

In the acts of her life, and their results, the same vacillation was apparent. She might, perhaps, have saved Labédoyère,* if she had obeyed her first thought; but different suggestions were offered in turn; her inspiration was at the mercy of the last person whom she saw; and one of these persons, an enemy of Labédoyère, was careful to remain with her until just before the hour of the emperor's visit, by which time her merciful and kindly impulse had cooled, and was effectually resisted.

Her feelings and imagination were under no restraint. Her self-deception in matters of fact was profound, and sometimes amusing. One day, in the year 1815, she said to some one who came to see her in the evening, at the hour of prayer, "Great works are being accomplished. All Paris is fasting." And her friend, who had just come from the Palais Royal, where he had seen everybody at dinner, tried in vain to undeceive her. A trait very characteristic of one who, when a woman of the world, was always fancying that some Gustave or other had died for the love of her.†

It is interesting to inquire what were, in 1815, the relations of Mme. de Krüdener with certain celebrated individuals whose minds should have been congenial with her own on more points than one. Mme. de Staël admired

* Charles Angélique François Huchet, Count de Labédoyère, a brilliant but unfortunate French officer, distinguished for his personal bravery in some of Napoleon's most famous battles. While remaining faithful to the latter in his misfortunes, and one of the first to join him on his return from Elba, he yet had the courage to protest in person against the emperor's system of reckless usurpation. He lingered unaccountably in Paris after Napoleon's final overthrow, and was one of the earliest victims of the Restoration, having been shot in the plain of Grenelle, August 19, 1815.—Tr.

† "What!" said some one whom she had informed that a certain young man was dead; "why, he is at Geneva!" "My dear friend," she exclaimed, with all her natural grace, "if he is not dead, he is not much better."

her as the author of "Valérie," but the genius of the former was too decidedly political and historic for her to sympathize with our heroine in her high prophetic vein, and she rather made light of it. Not so Benjamin Constant. He saw much of Mme. de Krüdener in 1815, and found in her presence consolation for his sorrows, and food for certain cravings in his soul. The political vicissitudes which the illustrious publicist was then enduring are well known; his religious emotions were correspondingly agitated. They returned to the charge, and made, as it were, a last desperate struggle on the extreme confines of his youth. Other secret troubles he had, which were gathering into a final storm. To Mme. de Krüdener he repaired in these days to seek a little rest, and remembrance in her prayers; Adolphe always the same beside a regenerated Valérie. We are kindly allowed to quote a few sentences containing a precious picture of their friendly relations. "I saw Mme. de Krüdener yesterday," writes Benjamin Constant,* "at first with other company, afterwards for a few hours quite alone. She produced upon me an unparalleled effect, which was heightened by a circumstance that occurred this morning. She sent me a manuscript, with the request that I would transmit it to you, and to you alone. I should like to read it with you, for it has done me good. It contains nothing very new. The joys and needs experienced by all alike cannot well seem new; but more than one of its passages went straight to my heart. It tells some trivial, but to me most poignant, truths. When I read these not very remarkable words, 'Many a time I have envied those who toil with sweat of the brow, who add one task to another, and lie down at the end of life, all unconscious of the mine of unexplored wealth man bears within him! Many a time I have said to myself, "Be like the rest,"'—when I read these words, I say, I burst into tears. The memory of a wasted, stormy life, which I have dashed with a kind or deliberate rage against every rock I encountered, came over me with a force I cannot describe."

* To Mme. Récamier.

Sad and striking incongruity ! Even while bewailing, in the presence of one whom he loved and admired, a certain habitual harshness which he would fain have softened, he was constituting himself the organ of a mystical sanctity, and attempting to propagate the same. He also wrote, " I tell myself that I must needs be what I am, else I could not lead you into a sphere of thought which I myself, unhappily, have not fully entered ; the lamp, however, diffuses light without seeing its own. . . . I had passed the day alone, and only went out to see Mme. de Krüdener. Excellent woman ! She does not know all, but she sees that I am consumed by a fearful anguish, and she kept me three hours, in the hope of soothing me. She told me to pray for those who had made me suffer ; to offer my own sufferings, if need were, in expiation for them." And again : " I am a harp broken by the storm, but resounding as it breaks with a harmony destined for your ear. . . . I am fated to enlighten you while preying on myself. I want to believe ; I try to pray." Unfortunately for Benjamin Constant, the transports which awoke at Mme. de Krüdener's side, and attained their height as these two recited the Lord's Prayer together, were not of an abiding nature, and he soon relapsed into a mood of captious irony and general disgust with the world, whence he was but fitfully aroused by the working of his noble civic passions.* Quitting France after 1815, Mme. de Krüdener travelled through several of the German States in succession, stirring up their inhabitants by the sound of her voice, but soon receiving leave to withdraw from their respective governments. M. de Bonald having ridiculed her on this account in a facetious article published in the "*Journal des Débats*" for March 28, 1817, † a friendly pen—none other, it may

* Under this head of interesting personal relations, we may remark that Mme. de Krüdener knew M. de Chateaubriand at the time of the appearance of "*Atala*," in 1801. His famous *Memoirs* will contain a very affectionate and impressive letter which she addressed to him in Rome, on hearing of the death of Mme. de Beaumont.

† M. de Bonald commences thus : " Mme. de Krüdener was once a pretty woman. She published a fictitious work, possibly of her own

be, than Benjamin Constant's own—defended her in the "Journal de Paris" of March 30, reminding the arrogant patrician, that, as a man of family at least, he owed some respect to the granddaughter of Marshal Munich.

Withdrawing presently beyond the echoes of Switzerland and the Rhine valley, the tones of Mme. de Krüdener's voice no longer reach us, and she comes no more within the range of our narrative. Anything further which we might add would be but a monotonous repetition of what has gone before. She published a few small works in Germany, extracts from which may be seen in M. Marmier's notice. University professors printed in detail the conversations they had held with her. In all the latter part of her apostolate, Mme. de Krüdener seems to me not very unlike the numerous sectaries that daily arise in England and the United States of America. The originality of her rôle is at an end. Having at last obtained permission to visit St. Petersburg, she was almost immediately banished for declaring in favour of the Greeks, and died in the Crimea, in 1824, while attempting to found a kind of penitentiary. All honour to one who continued to the end, amid all the opprobrium excited by her zeal, an unflinching martyr in the cause of charity!

But, as a mere act of gratitude, it behooves France to cherish the memory of a woman who early fixed her eyes upon her, who adorned her society, adopted her language, enriched her literature; who loved her at all times with a love like that of Mary Stuart; and who, when her whole soul was laid bare in her hour of mystical exaltation, showed that she had conceived no higher mission than

composition, under the title, I believe, of 'Valéric.' It was sentimental and moderately tiresome. At present she is absorbed in a life of mystical devotion, and in the deliverance of vaticinations which are fictions too, but of another sort." He concludes in the same strain: "I make bold to declare, with the Bible in my hand, that the poor we shall always have with us, were it only the poor in intellect." The anonymous writer in the "Journal de Paris" allows himself to characterize the final play upon words as worthier of Potier or Brunet than of a Christian seriously penetrated with the spirit of the gospel.

that of being to France the Joan of Arc of peace, unity, and mercy.*

* In a different vein from ours, but without malevolence, and with a perfect understanding of his subject, a cousin of Mme. de Krüdener's, the Count d'Allonville, has devoted to her a chapter, which may be consulted in vol. vi. p. 292, of his "*Mémoires Secrets*."

MADAME GUIZOT.

(NÉE PAULINE DE MEULAN.)

THERE are certain individuals who bring into this world, and exhibit from their earliest youth, a faculty of acute and sagacious observation, uninfluenced by enthusiasm, aiming directly at the truth, and peculiarly sensitive to all that is weak, eccentric, and absurd. While, for the most part, great minds begin with passion, either by a kind of trustful, graceful, pastoral illusion, or by a misanthropy rebellious and superb,—while to some life opens gay and alluring, as to Paul and Virginia, and to others its aspect is rather stern, sublime, and imposing, as to Emile and to Werther,—the apprenticeship of the early-mature and thoughtful natures which we describe is smoother and less hazardous. They find this world, at the outset, neither merry, nor sad, nor hostile to themselves, but rather, at once, better and worse than so. The majority of men, when youth is passed, revert to a correct appreciation of things. Those who, at the beginning, cherish a confiding and innocent enthusiasm, are taught by their mistakes the knowledge of evil, and often, during their years of mortifying experience, are inclined to assign it too large a place. When M. de la Rochefoucauld had ceased alike to love and to rail, he no doubt laid too great a stress on human malice, his wrath being excited against it still more by his gout and his bad eyes. Those, on the contrary, who begin by taking a very lofty tone with circumstances, who are austere stoics and sombre dreamers before twenty-five, fall back, as life advances, and become

more lenient, or, at least, more indifferent. The author of "Werther," if ever for one moment he resembled his hero, would furnish a beautiful instance of this gradual pacification, whereof it is easy to adduce less doubtful examples. But the essentially critical and moralistic mind does not usually require either great mistakes or direct revelations to secure the complete development and full exercise of its powers. It moralizes instantaneously, instinctively, by virtue of a special gift, and not from motives of weariness and reaction. Boileau had no need to experience strong passion, and endure floods of bitterness, in order to temper his discriminating and incisive verse, and suggest its application to those about him. Little as we know of the life of La Bruyère, I do not believe that even he required great personal trials to enable him to read hearts as he did. This penetrative faculty reveals itself early in those on whom it is bestowed. Vauvenargues seems to have been a sage in his youth. In that illustrious and sober family of moralists, which begins with La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, and comprises Vauvenargues and Duclos, Mme. Guizot is our latest author, and, for that very reason, not yet fully appreciated.

Properly speaking, the moralist has a taste and a genius for observing men and things, for taking them as they come,—no matter how,—and piercing their disguises and sounding their depths. For him there is neither general theory, nor system, nor method. A practical curiosity is his guide. His science is, so to speak, like the botany of the age before Jussieu and Linnæus—the botany of Jean Jacques. Thus every person he meets, in all his intercourse with society, becomes subject of remark and discrimination. Everything affords a point of view. It is his amusement—nay, it is the exercise of his creative power—to look about him at random, and take concise and piquant note of the actual. Some disagreeable or insignificant individual passes—speaks. He is observed and his likeness seized. The moralist reads a book. From the preface he derives some knowledge of the author, and

accepts and contradicts his theory. By the time he has reached the twentieth page, how many reflections have occurred to him! The author would almost seem to have made his volume for his critic's sake. Literary criticism is never anything more than an occasion or point of departure for the moralist. He is present at a theatrical representation. What an opportunity for expatiation or dissent! It is not enough for him to say, "This is good," or, "This is bad;" "I am amused," or, "I am bored." He considers and reconstructs the drama. He reviews the action of the characters, not from the dramatic point of view, but supplying the details of real life. "Tartufe" suggests "Onuphre." So he proceeds, calmly, but with gusto, deliberately observing and taking notes of many items on many points. As for generalization and the discussion of metaphysical laws,—these things he does not attempt. His is a work of tact, and not of doctrine; his special concern is with civilised man and social accidents. In the statements he makes he insists upon a few comparisons which, to him, are perfectly obvious,—sure, above all things, that different truths can never contradict one another. La Bruyère strikes me as an excellent model of the moralist when so conceived. I cannot imagine a La Bruyère in our own day. We are said to have freedom of the press; but would a book like La Bruyère's find favour among us? The poor author would be disgraced, I fancy, as often as he should abandon the maxim and betake himself to the consideration of individual instances. The gentlemen of Versailles comprehended raillery far better than do some of our superb moderns. Another and more fundamental reason why La Bruyère would be improbable at the present time is, that we have no conception of some of those faults on which the keen glance of the moralist alights, and which he in some sort discovers. For instance, 'fool' is a word not very frequently employed of late, but one which the moralist lived upon in other days. Now the fact is, that we are no longer very sensitive to the defect which this word implies; and folly,—a spice of folly,—if joined to some

degree of talent, has become an instrument of success. A little folly, in connection with genius, is a kind of label which proclaims a man's quality. Besides, we live at an era when the public would rather have a man's character officially announced in advance, than be obliged to discover the same for themselves. But since we have now to speak of an admirable moralist, let us not be too despondent concerning the future of this precious order, which, until lately, had never failed in France. Mme. Guizot herself has somewhere said, that when a repeated and lasting derangement occurs in any order of things, some gifted person never fails to appear unexpectedly and remedy the defect.

Mme. Guizot has been better known and more frequently classified as an author of remarkable treatises on education, than as a moralist, strictly so called. The two volumes collected under the title of "*Conseils de Morale*," do indeed reveal her in the latter light; but in these her assumption of the character appears, if I may so express myself, less natural and spontaneous than we ascertain it to have been after an attentive study of her genius. Her brilliant *début* as a moralist belongs to a portion of her life which borders upon the eighteenth century, and which has excited less remark than her subsequent labours.

Mlle. Pauline de Meulan was born at Paris in 1773, and educated in the ideas and habits of what was then the first society. Her father, M. de Meulan, receiver-general for the district of Paris, was in the enjoyment of a large fortune, which he dispensed hospitably and in good taste. Her mother, a maiden of Saint-Chamans, was highly connected, being of an ancient family of Périgord, which was even represented in the crusades. The company that frequented the house of M. de Meulan was much the same as that which visited M. Necker and M. Turgot—M. de Rulhières, de Condorcet, Chamfort, De Vaines, Suard, etc. M. de Meulan had taken, as a secretary, at a high salary, Collé, on whose Memoirs Mlle. de Meulan afterwards passed judgment in the "*Publiciste*," and whom, despite his levity,

she recognised as very honourable and high-minded.* A thoughtful child, tenderly cherished by her mother, intelligent but without marked vivacity, and somewhat sickly, little Pauline passed her early years in a social sphere the stamp of which she gradually acquired, and plainly showed in after years. It constituted a rare, truthful, carefully executed and permanent background to her experience. But her infancy and her girlhood showed no traces of that enthusiastic sensibility whereof Mlle. Necker, seven years her senior, gave such eloquent proofs. "I have but a vague recollection of 'Werther,' which I read when I was young," she remarks, a few years later; and so it was to be with many of the books whose hold upon young minds is usually strongest, but to which her own did not respond. As the Revolution drew near, she began to feel its impulse. She took an interest in events, and in the triumph of those opinions, which, as originally developed in 1787 and 1789, were hers, and those of the world immediately about her. But dissensions were not slow to arise, and the increasing violence of the shocks which ensued soon cooled her early ardour. The general impression left upon her mind by the Revolution was that of a frightful spectacle, which outraged all her affections and habits of life, although to some extent conformable to her opinions. Perhaps this was why she had no more youth. This ever-present incongruity was to her a kind of sad and oppressive enigma. The self-same cause, at the self-same time, bespoke the approval and excited the revolt of her reason. In this painful strait were quickened the powers of a mind which we shall see issuing thence strong, critical, incisive, most sensitive to discord, prompt to detect the genuine, and swiftly and surely to dissect it from the false.

In these trials, also, her serious mind was attempered to virtue. Her father's death, in the year 1790, the ruin of her family, her forced residence at Passy, and her uninterrupted reflections during the hard winter of 1794 and 1795, caused her to concentrate her moral forces upon the necessities of her nearest friends, and revealed the energy of her character.

* See Colle's Journal for August 1751, vol. i. p. 417.

M. de Rémusat says it was during this long winter, one day, while she was engaged in drawing, that the suspicion occurred to her that she might possess unusual mental gifts.* The idea of being able, some day, to employ her talents in the discharge of her sacred obligations, moistened her eyes for a moment with noble tears. She read more, she read slowly. Even in the earlier pages of a book, her fruitful and reflective mind turned readily to her own thoughts, which were excited in multitudes by those of the author. She knew English, and perfected herself in it. That clear, sensible, forcible language became as familiar to her as her own. Old friends of her family, such as MM. Suard and De Vaines, encouraged her first attempts with systematic and watchful kindness. A striking piece, written in 1807, and entitled "Friends in Misfortune," seems to me to contain some allusions to this her situation in former years. Of course, all the friends of Mlle. de Meulan were not as efficient and invaluable as MM. de Vaines and Suard. The same individuals, who afterwards pitied her so charitably for having become a journalist, sometimes excited an ironical smile by their forward and futile advice. "Friends, many in number," she used to say, "on whom you cannot rely; a quantity of money to handle, without the power of keeping any; many debts, but no credit; much business, but no profit." She was probably thinking, just then, of her own domestic embarrassments, of that fortune of several millions overtaken by complete ruin, which they say she succeeded in reducing to order, and all claims upon which she met, saving nothing for herself but the consciousness of freedom from debt. During the years when this care was upon her, she displayed remarkable practical ability, and a knowledge of business, whose exercise was, however, always restricted to private life.

* We shall guard against reproducing the facts which we are pleased to find in M. de Rémusat's notice, detailed with the high-minded delicacy peculiar to himself, and of which he is only too sparing (1836). Since then M. de Rémusat has appealed from the regret here expressed, making manifold display of his powers, with a versatility and acumen all his own.

Mlle. de Meulan's first literary effort was a romance in one volume, entitled "Contradictions ; or, What may Happen," published in the year VII. She was about twenty-six years old, and for so young an author, and a woman, her *débüt* strikes me as very remarkable. In the first chapter, the hero awakes on Decadi* morning, happy in the thought that he is to be married on that day to the lively and agreeable Charlotte. His servant Pierre, a kind of Jacques the Fatalist, a discreet and honest man, remarks, according to his wont, as he attires his master, "Well, monsieur, did I not always tell you so?" They repair to the bride's house, find her ready, and thence proceed to the municipality, or hall of the town council, where they were expected. The municipal officer, however, is absent. His wife has been confined on the previous evening, and he must have his Decadi to make merry with his friends, and celebrate the birth of his child. "To-morrow, then," says everybody ; and the party retire slightly disappointed, all except the rival, who attends the wedding as Charlotte's cousin, and who smiles, while Pierre, the optimist, having greatly incensed his master by the repetition of his favourite speech, rejoins, "Who knows?" On the morrow it rains ; they are late at the municipality, and find the officer gone. The next day the *fiancée* is summoned to the bedside of an old aunt, who is dying. In short, from Decadi to Primidi, from Primidi to Duodi, from mischance to mischance, the marriage with Charlotte, who is something of a coquette, gets itself constantly postponed,—the hero himself being rather fickle and very irresolute. The situation, which at first appears piquant, is prolonged till it becomes uninteresting. The persistent and perpetually recurring joke has a mysterious and preconcerted air. But the idea of choosing as a subject of a novel a complication arising in a great measure out of the republican calendar, and the confusion of Decadi and Primidi, etc. ; the capability of laying one's scene in a petty provincial town, haunted by graceful but totally

* Decadi was the tenth and last day of the decade, or period of ten days, which replaced the week in the revolutionary calendar.—Tr.

unheroic figures,—bores, coquettes, and men of unstable character,—these things, in a person of her age, argue a decidedly original turn of mind, and a keen sense of the ridiculous, the incongruous, and the unsuitable. In the same manner, the first effort of Despreaux was a satire on the entanglements of Paris. It would be easy to collect from the Contradictions, which might just as well be called the Contrarieties, a number of neat remarks on tattlers and busybodies. There is a very delicate allusion to the evasions which we practise upon ourselves in different cases. “I cannot say,” says the hero, “whether everybody is like me, but when I have been long engaged in any matter of unusual interest, and when the difficulties which beset its successful management have compelled me to regard it in many different lights, I grow cold, and cease to attach any importance to what, a moment before, I considered indispensable.” And, elsewhere, “As always happens when one is very much occupied with any plan, however unimportant, I forget, for a moment, all my sorrows.” What could a satirical recluse of forty-five say more? Of melancholy and reverie, so called, there is not a trace, save one touching chapter in “L’Ecu de six Francs,” which at once recalls some remarks on Sterne, by Mlle. de Lespinasse. Henriette, who finally displaces Charlotte in the hero’s heart, is a fresh, plump little lady of twenty-four, not without her charm. Charlotte, the frail, is droll but fascinating. The unimpassioned hero, odd as one of La Bruyère’s characters, who dreams one night the pleasant dream that he is going to marry four wives, becomes tender at the last, when he bursts into tears at the feet of Henriette.* The style is good, concise, pure, clear, free from objectionable idioms. Once, indeed, she speaks of a person who had never been regarded under a

* Mme. Guizot loved to relate that when, in her girlhood, she attempted this first romance, she studied to secure its success by mimicking certain peculiarities of the spirit of her time; some few, in fact, whose importance she, in her perfect innocence, hardly guessed. She put them in without scruple, as fast as they occurred to her, saying, “It is all for my mother.” “If I had suspected more,” she declares, “I should have added more such confidence was inspired in

like aspect, one of those forms of expression which neither Voltaire nor Courier could tolerate. M. Suard should not have allowed this to pass. He should have rooted out the only species of fault with which it was afterwards possible to reproach a style, remarkable, otherwise, for its truth and simplicity, and especially for its fidelity to the thought.

We find no more trace, in the Contradictions, of religious sentimentalism, than of any other dreamy and impassioned propensity. The part played by Pierre, with his constant submission to Providence, is marked by a touch of fine and gentle raillery, which is neither very shocking nor very elevating. The excellent Pierre, as we have already said, is a kind of respectable Pangloss, a Jacques the Fatalist, whose acquaintance may be acknowledged. As we pronounce, with all due circumspection, these names, which must needs be slightly offensive and suspicious, let us seize the opportunity of adding, that one of the most distinctive traits of Mlle. Meulan's mind, as well on her first appearance as in those contributions to the "Publiciste" which we are presently to review, is an absence of all false prudery and prim fastidiousness. In the sobriety of her reason and the soundness of her conscience, she traced no factitious and impassable circle about herself. Mlle. de Meulan thought it no condescension to pronounce, upon occasion, a deliberate estimate of Collé. Between a paper on the "Princesse de Clèves" and one on "Eugène de Rothelin," she frankly approached the subject of Louvet's romance, and, without disguising her identity or strongly repressing her indignation, she ridiculed it as a sham picture of manners, convicted it of falsity, and remanded it to the seamstresses, the milliners, the hairdressers, and the lawyers' clerks of the pre-revolutionary period, for whom, without doubt, it was composed. Mme. Roland, who thought the romance pretty, and who had searched it with secret pleasure for information about

me by the simple words, 'It is all for mother.'" Notwithstanding this pleasant explanation of her motives, the style (or tone) of the Contradictions is, as a general thing, spontaneous rather than studied, natural and not premeditated.

the manners of a class which she detested, would have turned purple on the perusal of Mlle. de Meulan's article ; but it would have cured her on the spot.

There is one passage in the Contradictions which shows very plainly how independent was Mlle. de Meulan's thought, and how entirely in all matters she formed her own opinions. It is where Pierre, encouraged by the moderate enthusiasm of his master before the colouade of the Louvre, remarks, "It is fine, of course ; but, with monsieur's permission, it is thought so because people have to come a good way to see it. For my part, I very much prefer our church, with the variety of faces and figures in its niches, to these columns that are all alike, and signify nothing." Was this judgment on the Gothic, put into Pierre's mouth in the year VII., intended for anything but a lively sally ? I should not dare affirm it. But, at a later period, I find Mlle. de Meulan arriving at opinions in matters of poetry equally novel and just, and by virtue of the same correct and independent reasoning. In two articles which appeared in November 1808, on "The Use of Certain Expressions in Poetry," the critic, taking for her theme a verse of "Bandoin," in which M. Lemercier has used "horses" instead of "coursers," attempts to determine the conditions under which it is proper to introduce common expressions into verse. In another article, dated March 1809, on the "Christopher Columbus" of the same author, who is now so cautious and negative, but was then in the mood to raise all manner of novel questions, she discusses still further the blending of the tragic and the comic. No false scruples, no superstitious tradition, hampers her sagacious logic in this delicate investigation. She does not look at the picturesque side of things. She does not heed the grand effects of dramatic contrast. She does not, I think, make sufficient allowance for the infinite resources of genius, for improvisation in art ; but at every word you recognise a person of ideas, of nice and healthful taste, free from prejudice, thorough-going, an enlightened rationalist in all things.

"Ayton Chapel," which appeared soon after the Contradic-

tions, and which has very much more of romantic interest, seems to me far less significant as a first attempt and presage of the author's future style. Mlle. de Meulan, having undertaken to translate the earlier pages of an English novel—"Emily Courtney"—presently determined to continue it on her own account, and after her own fashion. English novels, full of incident, emotion, and power, were then very much in vogue; our young author attempted something in the same line, and succeeded. Her imagination helped her in this natural and singularly moving style of composition. Compared with many of the fictitious works of that day, "Ayton Chapel" appears extremely rational and free from exaggeration and the sentimentalism elsewhere prevalent. The author, who is sympathetic, but always sensible, controls her characters and her situations, checking the former, and prolonging or cutting short the latter, at her will. This artificiality of arrangement is even too apparent. It tests, and more or less clearly betrays, the unreality of the whole thing. Pretty domestic scenes, family interiors, the effortless consistency of her characters, attest, moreover, that share of the dramatic faculty, that skill in dialogue and stage arrangement, of which Mme. Guizot has given proof in many of her other works—in her *Tales*, in her *Young Student*, and even in her *Letters on Education*; for, to a moderate degree, and so far as may come within the scope of the moralist, she possessed an inventive imagination. Her ideas by no means remained in the maxim state, but readily assumed, even in her own mind, a playful and conversational form. She could produce living characters that were no mere copies, and inform them with a certain activity. The creative gift, when displayed in its marvellous plenitude, she admired above all others. Molière, Shakspeare, and Walter Scott were her three great literary heroes—the only ones whom she actually loved.

M. Suard had established the "Publiciste" some time in 1801. M. Guizot's excellent remarks on the salon of this distinguished academician, and the company he received, are directly applicable to the sheet which expressed the

views of his clique with moderation, urbanity, and a tone of honest liberalism. M. de Rémusat says that the spirit which animated its contents was that of eighteenth-century philosophy, enlightened or intimidated by the Revolution. The "Décade," which was soon to become impossible, represented that philosophy in its entirety—its general doctrines embracing politics, religion, literature, and ideology—its last remnant of hopeful and proselyting ardour. The "Journal des Débats" raised at all points the opposite standard. M. Suard, the Abbé Morellet, and their friends who were partisans of the eighteenth century, and not of the Revolution, who stopped at D'Alembert, refusing to advance to Condorcet, and who in their lives remained practically faithful to the habits of thought and the refined tastes of the olden time, discovered that they were not properly represented by the "Décade," while, at the same time, they were disturbed and outraged to the last degree each morning by the diatribes and the recantations of the "Journal des Débats" and the "Mercure." Introduced to the "Publiciste" in the first instance by the friendship of M. Suard, Mlle. de Meulan found a shade of opinion harmonising very well with her own, and a convenient vehicle for essays of various kinds. For nearly ten years she furnished contributions to this journal on all sorts of subjects—on ethics, society, literature, plays, novels, etc.; and it would be impossible, without a review of her articles, to form an adequate idea of the versatile talent, the fertility of resource, and the apt originality which she displayed. Sometimes her pieces were anonymous; but she usually signed them with the initial P., and occasionally with the initial R., and a variety of others. Now replying in an assumed character to her own articles, she maintained a controversy with herself, sharply attacking the Geoffroya, the Fiévées, M. de La Harpe, and M. de Bonald; for she had a fondness for polemics, and never spared herself on these occasions. Anon, as opportunity offered, she reviewed and passed judgment on some academic eulogy, or some reprint of an old author. Writers like Vauvenargues, Boileau, Fénelon,

Duclos, Mme. de Sévigné, Mme. de La Fayette, Mme. des Houlières, Ninon, Mme. du Châtelet, she avenged of stupid slanders. But whether she briefly characterized Collin d'Harleville, Beaumarchais, Picard, Mme. Cottin, Mme. de Souza, discussed the elegy, or gently lectured Mme. de Genlis, her ardent reason never flagged under its varied activities, nor lost itself in futile phrases. Speaking of the logical faculty as exhibited in Boileau, she herself somewhere says, "In him it was a delicate, sensitive, irritable organ, wounded by a false sense as a fine ear is wounded by a false note, and rising in its wrath the moment it received a shock." Something of this same vivacity and vigilance of reasoning Mlle. de Meulan also displayed during the singularly active period through which we are to follow her. In this her character of literary critic and philosophical partisan she is not sufficiently well known. The two volumes entitled "Moral Counsels" are almost entirely made up of pages extracted from her articles, of original and striking introductions to critiques on one or another long-forgotten comedy of the day,—her opinions of the authors being omitted. While glancing with inexpressible interest over this large collection,—the pious labour of domestic love,—it has occurred to us to desire that another volume of extracts might be published—a volume more literary in its character than the "Conseils de Morale," whose contents should simply preserve their primitive stamp, and which might restore to light, or at least rescue from utter oblivion, many a nice and accurate estimate, many a minute characteristic which will never be so well described again when the same themes are under treatment, many which will never be described at all.

The first articles furnished to the "Publiciste" by Mlle. de Meulan were collected and reprinted some time in 1802, in a small duodecimo, which was never offered for sale. They were also inserted in the volumes of Miscellanies which M. Suard published at about the same time.* It was on this

* M. Suard published three volumes of Miscellanies in 1803, and two more at a later period, making five volumes in all. In the preface to

occasion that Mme. de Staël, always prompt to extend an affectionate welcome to nascent merit, wrote to the academician in question, "I have read with infinite pleasure some of the pieces in your *Miscellanies*, and I need not say how far I can distinguish from all the rest those signed with the letter P. But pray tell me if Mlle. de Meulan is indeed the author of the fragment on Vauvenargues, and those on Thibet, the English, etc. They so far transcend the ordinary efforts even of a gifted woman, that I fancied I detected your hand in their composition." It must have been after receiving M. Suard's reply that Mme. de Staël wrote to Mlle. de Meulan, making an offer of her friendship, and begging that she would use her as a banker, and give her the preference over others. Mlle. de Meulan accepted only the fragrance of kind feeling which these offers exhaled. In her earlier articles, Mlle. de Staël had come up for discussion. Alluding to a sentence in which the author of "*Malvina*"—Mme. Cottin—had apparently denied her sex the capability for producing any philosophical work, the critic mentioned Mme. de Staël's recent treatise on Literature, and took occasion to eulogize more than one of his passages, and animadvert on more than one of its censors; while, in her turn, although with great tenderness and reserve, she touched upon certain less satisfactory points. Mme. de Staël,—who on this occasion received some such ingenious suggestions as the following,—"Care less that your praises should be loud than that they should be harmonious,"—was not thereby deterred, as we have seen, from a recognition as honourable to her heart as were the suggestions themselves to the refined and dignified intelligence of Mlle. de Meulan.

Our critic, in the early maturity of her intellect, passed judgment on "*Atala*," also, in an article marked by temperate admiration, and observations of the most judicious character. But even while thus paying homage to the two last (1804), he is careful to state that a large proportion of the pieces they contained are by the author who in the earlier volumes had adopted the signature of P. M. de Barante assures me that the most important of these pieces—that, namely, on the History of the French Theatre—is by Mlle. de Meulan.

genuine talent, when enlisted in the cause of religion, Mlle. de Meulan remanded to their proper places both Citizen La Harpe and Citizen Vauxcelles, who had made an article of her own on Fénelon's "Education des Filles" the occasion of delivering, the one before the Lyceum itself, and the other I know not where, mechanical harangues on irreligious fanaticism and some other well-nigh exploded platitudes. In a letter to a friend whom she supposed to be pondering a pamphlet on behalf of the philosophers, she wittily demanded, "Why a pamphlet? Is it to prove that Voltaire is a great poet, and "Zaïre" a touching composition,—or rather, that the word philosopher is not exactly synonymous with Septembrist?"* And so on in this *douairière du Marais* tone, which she greatly affects. "The mania of your time of life," she ends by saying, "is to want to make men hear reason. The experience of mine teaches me that they had better be left to revert to it themselves; that time generally restores them to just and right views; but that justice and right have rarely convinced any one." What a mind is this! how practical, how trustworthy, beginning where other sages end! Patience, and with the lapse of years we shall see it undergoing a marvellous development in the direction of enthusiasm, tenderness, and faith. These well-preserved souls, so chary of passion, have high and warm impulses at the season when those who were more ardent in the beginning are growing apathetic. From beneath their profound reasonings come forth to light their late but noble passions, as the pure wheat of the wise man's last granaries is dispensed when winter and want prevail. So it was with her of whom we speak. She began by assuming the tone of Duclos; she ended by listening to Bossuet. But we will not anticipate.

In those of her early contributions to the "Publiciste" which bear date, Floreal, year X., we find, under the title "Detached Thoughts," some few of the very purest stamp and deepest significance—ideas at once subtle and comprehensive, very pungent, and yet of wide application. For in-

* One who defended the massacres of September 1792.—TR.

stance: "We care nothing for brilliant speeches, unless they present some idea which we have never before entertained; nor for tender speeches, unless they recall some emotion which we have experienced. The difference is precisely that between a new acquaintance and an old friend." And this other: "Glory is the superfluous part of honour, and, like every other superfluity, it can hardly be attained except at the expense of the needful. Honour is less rigid than virtue; glory more easily satisfied than honour, because the more a man dazzles by his liberality, the less we dream of asking whether he pays his debts." She is always arriving at truth by way of paradox; she gives us sense under a piquant aspect; she grasps, as it were, an idea by the point. There is something of Seneca in this early manner of her mind,—of Seneca with less of fancy and colour, but with more real soundness and accuracy. A kind of humour gives emphasis to what she says. She is fond of quoting the philosopher Lichtenberg. Many of these pieces of hers are charming little treatises, which together form a complete whole, rendered coherent by circumstances which she imagines and correspondences which she suggests. Here she can, as they say, create for herself a form. But her talent is not reserved for special occasions. Many of the durable thoughts collected in "Moral Counsels" were discovered in the midst of articles on some silly novel or insipid vaudiville, and extracted thence, having germinated spontaneously, like flowers in the crevice of a wall.* These numer-

* "The loves of youth need a flavour of surprise, as those of later years need a flavour of habit." (15th Thermidor, year XIII. From the review of a novel entitled "Julie de Saint-Olmont.")

"Love, youth, the sweet natural affections, afford quite as many chances of life as of death; quite as many sources of consolation as of affliction. We do not surrender to sorrow so long as any other sentiment has power to distract the mind; and he who loses what he loves best will by no means die if he have anything left to live." (13th Prairial, year XII. From the review of a tale by Mme. de Genlis.)

"A woman who has reached the end of youth must not suppose that she has any further concern with passion—not even with *Vergil's* it. Her strength must henceforth lie in calm, and not in courage." (April 10, 1806.)

ous views, never conflicting, because always just, which may even be said to have met and coalesced at a certain depth in Mlle. de Meulan's being, constitute, when taken collectively, a view of the world and of society, rather than a philosophical theory of the mind and its laws. A woman who has borne with honour an illustrious name—Mme. de Condorcet, fifteen years the senior of Mlle. de Meulan, and more closely connected than she with the world of the "Décade"—attempted at about this time, in her letters to Cabanis on Sympathy, a strictly philosophic analysis of the various human sentiments. In this essay, which is too little known, it might be possible to detect some points of resemblance to the style of Mlle. de Meulan, as, for example, this: "The mind is like those instruments which overtask and weary the hands that carry without using them." But, in general, their methods are distinct and even contrary. A sort of mania, like that of Helvetius, for universal happiness, an eager confidence in the power of truth, and zeal for its discovery (which Mlle. de Meulan had not yet attained), gave pathos to the calm analysis of Mme. de Condorcet, and circulated through its pages of abstractions, mingling, in many places, an element of sensibility and eloquence all the more affecting because held in check. What an austere charm attaches to the portrait of the benevolent and sympathetic man! And whenever she has to treat of love, how fondly, and yet with what gravity and sadness, does she approach the subject! What hopeless regret, amid all the wisdom of her speculations, is betrayed by the final allusion to that enchanted cup. Mme. de Condorcet had received the torch and inherited the passion of the eighteenth century. Mlle. de Meulan had only its tone and turn of mind and certain of its habits of judgment and speech. Passion was to come to her from another source.

It would certainly be a pleasant task, although too long and laborious, to review those of Mme. Guizot's articles which have not been collected, and her many nice and accurate observations on every author she discussed. Although literary criticism was never her forte, she has left

traces there which I should regret to see effaced and lost for ever. No better or more exhaustive estimate was ever made of Ducloux than hers of August 6, 1810. To Boileau is awarded the superior rank, which is justly his due, in several articles dated Pluviose, year XIII. She was not without a certain intellectual sympathy with Boileau, notwithstanding the predominance in her of the moral over the literary element. Her acquaintance with English literature was marvellous. The poets and philosophers of that nation she had thoroughly mastered, and was herself worthy to be compared with the great critical moralists, Addison and Johnson. In July and August 1809, I find articles of hers on Collin d'Harleville. She divides the history of his genius into two distinct periods, separated by the Revolution,—the one being marked by success, the other by reverse. In the latter, Collin, overcome by the spectacle of social chaos, essayed to depict manners, and failed; "for," she says, "it was not society which Collin d'Harleville was destined to portray. The tendency of his mind was rather subjective than objective. He describes what he has felt rather than what he has seen." The name of Collin d'Harleville will keep its place in the history of literature, and he who overlooks Mlle. de Meulan's able estimate will be in danger of seeing and judging him less fairly than she. At that time, 1806, Leopold Collin was reprinting and publishing a vast number of letters belonging to the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries, from the pen of Mlle. de Montpensier, Ninon, Mme. de Coulanges, Mlle. de Launay, etc. These writers Mlle. de Meulan discusses like one of themselves,—a sort of tardy contemporary. She says of Mme. des Houlières, "The only fault of her idyls is that of being too determinately idyllic: she puts in wit everywhere, and flowers wherever she can." "The talent of Mme. Cottin is such," she says, "that you cannot criticise her until the emotions she excites have subsided; and these emotions are very enduring." She says of the style of Mme. de Genlis, that "it is always good, and never better." But along with all

this subtlety and acumen, by virtue of which she is the latest heir to Mme. de Lambert, she has her strong qualities. Polemics never terrified her; and the blows which she dealt in her vein of ironical courtesy were harder than those which the poet attributes to "Herminie." It delighted her to repeat, over and over again, with an air of smiling malice, the college pedantries of Geoffroy and company, even on the subject of the Latin, in which she was somewhat versed.* But her most remarkable controversy, and one which is worthy of republication, was that which she carried on with M. de Bonald, in Vendémiaire and Brumaire, in the year XIV. The author of "Primitive Legislation" had set forth in the "Mercure," at great length, and after the manner of violent and paradoxical minds, when moved to the support of absolute theses,—the idea that he who is neither a Christian nor a Catholic must of necessity be an atheist. Mlle. de Meulan, under the guise of "A Disputant," reviewed the obstinate reasoner with sharp and telling ridicule. "Discussion, monsieur, is a necessity. Without it life had better be short; it would, in fact, be altogether too long. I have found a perfect treasure in your argument against Deism. If I understand you, monsieur, truth is necessarily one of two extremes, because the same proposition cannot have degrees of truth," etc. An officious partisan of M. Bonald interfered during the quarrel, and addressed several letters to the "Publiciste," in which he endeavoured to soften his friend's paradox, and also animadverted on the tone of raillery which the "Disputant" had employed. The latter then closes the discussion by a last vigorous letter, which rises

* Mlle. de Meulan, like several of our distinguished French writers, was related to antiquity only by a Latin turn of mind. She had something in common with Seneca; that is to say, she touched antiquity through the most modern of the ancients. In an article in the "Archives Littéraires" (vol. iii. page 325), she observes, "The ancients frequently said 'swift as light,' but, if I mistake not, 'swift as thought' is of modern origin." On this particular point she was mistaken, as Boissonade (page 318 of his "Aristænete") and Dugas-Montbel (in his Observations on the fifteenth book of the Iliad) have shown by repeated instances.

to a strain of eloquence. After quoting this remark of an ancient writer, that "an idea which cannot stand the test of ridicule is at least suspicious," after citing Pascal on Grace, Boileau on the Love of God, and M. de la Harpe himself making merry over the Theophilanthropists, Mlle. de Meulan retorts upon her adversaries their reproach of danger to be apprehended to the cause of religion from this too animated party strife. "You discuss in the newspapers what you do not want discussed after the manner of newspapers. You introduce the subject of religion. May not others do the same? A man who is a reproach to literature constitutes himself the guardian of religion, and the friends of religion applaud! She is abandoned to such hands as may deign to undertake her service, and considered only too fortunate in obtaining defenders at all! No, monsieur, you must reserve yourself for discussions not intended for the public, for more inviolable asylums, and a less corruptible audience,"—and so on to the end of the letter. Thus combat suited her spirit well; she was born for fiery arguments, and the earnest pursuit of truth.

Much was, of course, said in the world of the articles of Mlle. de Meulan, and they were variously regarded. Talents so remarkable, a pen so free in the treatment of every subject, do not invariably awaken a spirit of sincere good-will. It was impossible to refuse respect to the author, and society fell back on the question of personal decorum. Those "friends in misfortune," which she has hit off so fairly,—those "Job's comforters," always the same,—bemoaned aloud the necessity which reduced a woman of her birth to the writing of newspaper articles, and particularly of dramatic criticism. Disgusted with this venomous compassion, she replied to it nobly by her *Letter of a Female Journalist to a Friend*, published December 18, 1807. "My articles are censured, are they, my friend! That, of course, is to their credit; but you tell me the censure extends to me personally,—to the stand I have taken as contributor to a journal, and especially as a critic of theatrical novelties. I am reproached, therefore, with

being a woman, not surely with being a journalist, for those of my censors who know me know very well why I am that. But do they not fear that they may have wherewith to reproach themselves, if, by words lightly uttered, they succeed in destroying, or at least in rendering more difficult of exercise, the courage found requisite for the sacrifice to what I considered a duty, of the conventionalities which my education and habits had taught me to respect. I know them, my friend, and so do you,—these conventionalities which make the rôle of a journalist the very oddest for a woman to choose,—if, indeed, it ever were adopted from choice. It cannot, I assure you, appear as ridiculous to these friends of yours as to me, for they have never seen it so near. If they knew, as well as I, the grave interests at stake, the important considerations to be weighed, the absurd griefs to be consoled, and the still more absurd homage to be accepted; the buzz of petty passions, whose noise invades a woman's very solitude; and if they could see, amid all this, a work to be done without charm for the mind, or indemnification for the vanity, then they might say what they thought, and think, if they pleased, that I had undertaken this work for my own pleasure. But let them not attempt to pity me, for that would be as unreasonable as to blame.

'Ce que j'ai fait, Abner, j'ai cru le devoir faire.'*

"I think so still, and I see no reason why I should now distress myself about annoyances which I foresaw without trepidation. You know how gladly and hopefully I submitted to these; you saw me face them with something of pride, perhaps, when I formed the resolution whose sole merit lay in these annoyances. Circumstances have not changed since then, and why should my feelings?" Here is a woman wholesomely penetrated with the ideas of duty and of work, such as regenerated society imperatively demands; and such Mme. Guizot always remained. Issuing from the idle and polished salons of the eighteenth century,

* I have done what I thought it my duty to do.

she becomes a shining example of vigorous, intellectual, efficient womanhood, in the first rank of the middle class.

During her long connection with the "Publiciste" there occurred an incident, often related, and almost romantic in its character,—as much so as is possible, at least, between persons of intelligence and circumspection,—and whose influence upon the destiny of Mlle. de Meulan was supreme. In the month of March 1807, under the pressure of fresh domestic misfortunes, and with health greatly impaired, she had resolved to suspend her labours for a time, when a letter arrived containing the offer of articles which the writer would attempt to render worthy of her, as long as her own should be interrupted. The author of this anonymous letter, and of the articles which, after some slight hesitation, she accepted, was M. Guizot. Very young, and still obscure, he had heard M. Suard speak of Mlle. de Meulan and her situation, and he addressed her. We find, therefore, in the "Publiciste" for the ensuing months, certain miscellaneous, dramatic, and literary criticisms signed F. This singular circumstance came presently to constitute a stronger bond between these two eminent minds than the inequality of their ages, and the want of harmony, even, in their opinions, would probably else have allowed. M. Guizot brought with him into the world of letters decided political and religious convictions, which had still something of the absolute rigour of youth. Inimical to the eighteenth century and its scepticism, rather than to the Revolution, whose results, with his own interpretations and modifications, he accepted, he encountered in Mlle. de Meulan precisely the opposite temper. The latter, moreover, held rather, as we have seen, to the idea that "time alone brings men to just and right views, but that justice and right have rarely convinced any one." She used also to say, "Reason, unhappily, is only for reasonable people." The young man, fresh from Nismes and Geneva, and guarding, with Calvinistic fervour, his faith in unitarian Christianity and a sort of enthusiastic rationalism, felt the duty and the necessity of pursuing some definite end,—of

convincing others and urging them towards the same,—of testifying before the world to the idea that was active and dominant in himself. In a word, when he and Mlle. de Meulan met at a great intellectual altitude, it was the encounter of mental tendencies of an opposite, not to say hostile, origin. True it is, that during her years of long and serious labour, Mlle. de Meulan had learned a more sincere devotion to truth ; she had learned to believe in its utility, to defend it, to agonize for it, indirectly at least, by attacking every form of error, and also to bring each act of her austere life under the already religious empire of her reason and her will. Yet it was not the least of M. Guizot's intellectual triumphs, to conquer and warm up by degrees to his own convictions and hopes—to regenerate, in short, by union with himself—that other and maturer mind, to which the scope of M. Suard had long sufficed, and which seemed to have attained the natural limit of its growth in a striking originality.

For the rest, when we see what he gave, we can imagine what he must have received. A mind as forcible as Mlle. de Meulan's is not vanquished and occupied save by one who can modify and accommodate his own at many points. In these cases of reciprocal action, each of the actors, in turn, seems to have triumphed, according as we examine the other. And here, while retaining the prevailing influence, the victorious spirit must have received, and that consciously, its own indispensable share in the mitigation of its intolerance, and in a precocious knowledge of the world, and of the manipulation of society and men.

Their marriage did not take place until April 1812. And now a new era—that in which she is best known—begins for Mme. Guizot. The glow of affection heightened in her the ardour of conviction ; and this twofold fire, warming rather than shining, was to sustain and animate to the end her years of sober happiness. We have no longer to do with a moralist of the expiring eighteenth century, but with a writer of the new and busy age ; an assiduous and careful mother, who has felt sorrow, and is forming men ;

with a righteous philosopher intent upon proving the harmony, in every order of creation, between right and duty, faith and inquiry, liberty and law. Her style becomes less vivacious than in the past, less paradoxical and incisive, and loses its tone of loud and reckless irony. A constant feeling for the genuine, the true, the right, controls and directs, at all points, the mere artistic sense. Her principles are now fixed and high; her aim, henceforth, a practical one. Her first attempt in this direction was made after her marriage, and consisted of several articles, tales, and dialogues, inserted in the "Educational Review," a compilation by M. Guizot, whose publication was interrupted by the events of 1814. She also published at about the same time a volume of juvenile stories,—the first of her works,—to which, urged by a sense of moral responsibility, she attached her name. This line of labour, which had naturally been suspended during the early years of her husband's political career, she resumed in 1821, being moved thereto both by her own zeal for doing good, and by their honourable domestic necessities. She produced successfully, "Ralph and Victor; or, The Young Student," in 1821, the "New Tales" in 1823, and "Familiar Letters on Education" in 1826, which last is her true monument. "A Family" did not appear till 1828, after the author's death. In all these works, the "Familiar Letters" excepted, which must be considered by themselves, her excellent sense takes on the form of happily conceived fiction, of probable and interesting incident, where the author never intrudes herself. She who, at twenty-five, had assumed the airs of a person of uncertain age, or even a *douairière du Marais*, enters no less successfully, as she grows older, into the little world of children from ten to fourteen, and constantly brings home to them some wholesome evangelical moral, which she adapts to their comprehension without detracting from its dignity. "A fond and favourite idea of hers," says the preface to "A Family," "was, that the same moral education can and ought to be given to all ranks; that, under the sway of the most various external circumstances,

in good or bad fortune, whether the lot be obscure or distinguished, uneventful or stormy, man may attain—there may be induced in the child an inner development almost identical—the same integrity, the same delicacy, the same refinement of thought and feeling; that the human soul, in short, bears within it something which renders it equal to all the chances and changes of human condition; and that all we have to do is to reveal to itself the secret of its strength, and teach the true method of its employment. And how was Mme. Guizot, with her satirical reason, her somewhat scornful habits of thought, led so swiftly and surely to this, the plenary idea of genuine human democracy? Whence came to her the singular and vivid inspiration of all her subsequent works? She had become a mother. Her filial pity had been of the warmest. Her maternal love, as with all who marry late, was transcendent, clinging with unparalleled tenacity to the son whom she had never hoped to see, and upon whom, to use the father's happy expression, she has left her perfect impress.* Her treatises on education were therefore, in her own eyes, an act of maternal affection and duty. In the preface to the "Familiar Letters" she grows eloquent about what she calls this precious interest. Before she had a child of her own she had laboured and written for the support of her mother,—nothing more. She had doubted the efficiency of truth and reason in the world. She beheld absurdity, stupidity, and wrong, and she was not very hopeful. But once a mother, she felt the necessity of believing in a better future and a perfectible humanity,—in the virtue of those generations that would be contemporary with her child. She placed little dependence upon man, and saw no way to ameliorate his condition save by influencing his childhood,—a work which she undertook without delay. Persons of thirty, with some knowledge of the world and of life, if they are neither fathers nor mothers, and have not the pure and simple faith of the catechism, are often sorely embarrassed in the presence of childhood. What shall be said to this smiling, charming

* He has since been snatched away in the flower of his youth.

being, with the evident germ of future faults? How is he to be gradually initiated into life? How enlightened and not saddened; how left happy and not deceived? The man of sensibility will follow the example of the poet Gray, who, on revisiting Eton College, and seeing the merry boys at play, exclaims, after a complacent description of their gambols,—

“Alas! regardless of their doom,
 The little victims play!—
 No sense have they of ills to come,
 Nor care beyond to-day;
 Yet see how all around 'em wait
 The ministers of human fate,
 And black misfortune's baleful train!
 Ah, show them where in ambush stand,
 To seize their prey, the murderous band!
 Ah, tell them they are men.

“These shall the fury passions tear,
 The vultures of the mind,—
 Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
 And Shame, that skulks behind;
 Or pining Love shall waste their youth,
 Or Jealousy, with rankling tooth,
 That inly gnaws the secret heart!
 And Envy wan, and faded Care,
 Grim-visaged comfortless Despair,
 And Sorrow's piercing dart.

“To each his sufferings; all are men
 Condemned alike to groan,
 The tender for another's pain,
 Th' unfeeling for his own.
 Yet, ah, why should they know their fate
 Since Sorrow never comes too late,
 And Happiness too swiftly flies?
 Thought would destroy their paradise.
 No more; where Ignorance is bliss
 'Tis folly to be wise.”

But when one is not a sensitive and melancholy bachelor, like Gray, but a father, or, still more, a mother, these vague fears, and this disconsolate quietism, cease to satisfy. We become more interested in vigilance, and more accessible

to hope. We realize that many of those dread shadows, with which imagination peoples the distance, will vanish one by one, as our travellers advance. Mme. Guizot, whose turn of mind was naturally and in all respects the opposite of vague and dreamy,—who hated everything aimless and phantasmal,—felt all the anxieties which accompany maternity, and made a direct attack upon the difficulty by which she was confronted. Hitherto, she had believed man to be incorrigible, and rationality a happy accident, at most a special gift. She had written, with clever raillery, on the Inutility of Good Reasons. She now desired to atone for her previous prejudice, by going to the root of the matter, and approaching humanity on its only sensitive and amenable side,—that of childhood. The whole remnant of her intellectual life was devoted to the development and application of this salutary idea.

Mlle. de Meulan had frequently had occasion to broach her ideas on the subject of education. In 1802, in an article called forth by Fénelon's little treatise, she says, "Educational precepts have always seemed to me the least reliable things in the world. Principles must be so variously applied, and rules are subject to so many exceptions, that a treatise of this kind cannot be too short, because it can neither be sufficiently long nor sufficiently comprehensive to include every individual case." Under the form of Letters of a Mother to a Son-in-law (Thermidor, year XII.), she had discussed with varied ability the question of public education for women, taking the negative side, displaying extreme good sense as well as much wit, or rather pungency, and her own most free and easy style of composition. How altered is her tone, when in the first of the Familiar Letters, Mme. de Attilly opens her heart,—"overflowing," as she says, "with tender concern for her children!" Touches of sarcasm are not wanting here and there, as in the description of "Uncle de Revey," who, when he seated himself to his whist, always declared it to be improving. In the main, however, the work is entirely serious, which does not preclude an extraordinary

degree of subtilty upon many points. One should have authority and experience, and his own ideas on the subject under discussion should be formed before he is fitted to pass judgment on a treatise like this, whose chief importance lies in the utility and feasibility of its suggestions. "The hour of political reform is also that of educational schemes," says Mme. de Rémusat, a gifted and generous woman, who has paid, after a charming fashion, her own debt of service to the world. In fact, there has been since "Emile" no lack of educational theories, and their number has redoubled in these latter days; or rather the special outcry against the education and the condition of women has been renewed with clamorous insistence. Amid so many vain declamations, in which there figure at intervals some considerable difficulties and some real grievances, Mme. Guizot's book, which embraces the whole subject of education, masculine as well as feminine, offers a kind of honest and manly compromise between old ideas and modern progress. What I have called "a compromise," was, to her mind, nothing more nor less than truth adapted to the needs of humanity, but resting on an impregnable basis. The twelfth and thirteenth letters, which are marked by great philosophic beauty, set forth those principles of reason and conscience upon which she founds the idea of duty, and show that her chief care is to suggest, and make gradually clear to the child's mind, the notion of authority, that he may learn early and freely, and as far as in him lies, to direct his own young will thereby. Early to diffuse about the growing mind a moral atmosphere, to give it for a guide the love of right, to make the child as soon as possible a conscientious individual,—this is her earnest aim, and, despite conflicting prejudices, we must concede, as we listen to her, that she has discovered and indicated the true means of success. It is at least certain that in the majority of instances, when the child is, as they say, well born,—when there does not lurk within him any faculty so eccentric, or temper so obstinate, as utterly to baffle calculation,—a good result must follow such care as she enjoys.

For the rest, Mme. Guizot, whose arguments are founded on absolute fact, foresees and freely admits that there may be cases for which her system will not suffice. "I see more and more clearly each day," says Mme. de Attilly, "that youth is, of all ages, the one which is least explicable by childhood. The character seems then to be swayed by an independent influence, strength to resist which we may indeed supply, but with no previous conception of how that strength will have to be employed." Mme. Guizot alludes in one place to a dictum of Mrs. Hannah More about the total depravity of childhood, and combats it. On this point, let it be observed, Mme. Guizot is decidedly of the present century—of the thorough and indomitable school of experimental philosophy. She will allow no mysterious and irrational element in education. Here is her essential point of difference with Mme. Necker de Saussure, that other excellent author, with many of whose views she coincides, as Mme. Necker herself, in her second volume, is pleased repeatedly to remark. She occupies a sort of mean between Jean Jacques and Mme. Necker, being at the same time practical, which Jean Jacques is not, and reasonable, which Mme. Necker does not think it enough to be. In the second volume, the forty-ninth and fiftieth letters, with those that immediately follow, discuss exhaustively, and with admirable moderation, the whole delicate and embarrassing question of the religious education required by children. If her views do not meet and satisfy the ideas of those who adhere firmly to pure faith and rigorous traditions, she has the advantage of answering and providing for all the other more or less complex requirements and situations likely to be encountered in society, and also of proposing an attainable result both to Mme. Mallard and Mme. de Lassay. Somewhere in the discussion the name and authority of Turgot are invoked, and we are made to feel that the author's preferences, though modified and extended, are still retrospective, and cling to the eighteenth century. Mme. Guizot's book will stand next to "Emile," marking the difference, in this particular direction, between

the bold guesses of genius, and the sound, temperate, rectified reasoning of our own day; just as, in politics, M. de Tocqueville's "Democracy" is an advance upon the "Contrat Social." Invaluable for consultation to those who would, by previous training, prepare strong men for our painful modern society, this work also contains pages of morality, the finest in their manner of exposition, and, saving a few of M. Jouffroy's, the most earnest and the most convincing with which the doctrines of spiritualistic rationalism have inspired any philosopher of our age.

What share, apart from her own personal labours, had Mme. Guizot in those of her husband,—in all those valuable accessory publications by which he accompanied his main historical work,—and in which, beginning with the translation of Gibbon, she must have been his principal auxiliary? Let it suffice us to know that she had espoused all his interests,—his studious labours as well as his convictions,—and let us not attempt to discover what she preferred to conceal. Her happiness was great. Her sensibility, which grew with her years (refined privilege of a virtuous life), caused her to cling to that happiness more and more tenderly—I had almost said regretfully—as time went by. This sensibility, whereof she had so deliberately declared in youth,—sensibility spares us more suffering than it brings, for it removes at one stroke the pains of egotism, vanity, ennui, and inertia,—this sensibility, to which she owed so much pure delight, did its spring within her never fail? Did not her soul, as she neared the end,—even here, strong and calm reasoner that she was,—grow sorrowful? Her failing health amid a life so congenial, so virtuous, so affectionate; the great disparity in age between her husband and herself; her secret yearnings; her one acute presentiment that husband and child would yet be made happy by another than herself,—these things doubtless mingled with her last years more of passion and pathos than she would ever have dared anticipate in her youth. The exquisite rejuvenation in her impressions of all things was revealed in a thousand different ways. With the exception of a

tour in Languedoc and the South, where M. Guizot had taken her in 1814, she had never travelled much. She had scarcely seen the country, much less resided there; but she enjoyed it in her last summers as only those who have been forced to live by wax lights enjoy verdure and the fields. The tiniest tree in Passy or in the Bois de Boulogne gave her a new and refreshing emotion.

Yet she never described nature. Her care was less to depict what she felt than to express what she thought. She did not love art supremely. She looked rather to the substance than to the form, and preferred modern thought to antique beauty. Her ingenious, and perhaps too just, idea was, that the emotional element cannot predominate in a work of art without being withdrawn from the life of the artist. In one of her pieces, dated July 17, 1810, I read, "Our torch is lighted at the flames of sentiment," says the poet in "*La Métromanie*;" and I suppose that sensibility may in fact be regarded as the ailment of poesy, but only when it is not otherwise employed, and when, being entirely at the poet's command, it serves to stimulate without absorbing his imagination. It is necessary, no doubt, that a poet should be impressible, but I do not know that it is desirable for him to be deeply moved; and she continues refuting, or rather interpreting, Boileau's verses on the elegy. This idea that there is a species of illusion, or even of deception, inherent in art, did not prevent her being extraordinarily moved, towards the close of her life, by certain books and dramatic representations,—moved even beyond the point of enjoyment,—so that the effect of her agitation was more than she could bear. Herself a simple, practical person who had known sorrow, she did not readily yield to any artificial grief, neither could she submit to any restraint, or accept any consolation in the region of the ideal. M. de Rémusat has adduced the following pathetic avowal made by her in 1821: "The effect of a work of art should be unimpaired by any association with the actual; for the moment it seems real, the impression produced is painful, and soon becomes intolerable. This is

why I cannot endure, on the stage, or in poems or novels, under the name of Tancred, or Zaire, or Othello, or Delphine, the spectacle of great and fatal anguish of spirit. As far as joy and sorrow are concerned, my own life has been so full, so intense, that I cannot explore its depths, save with a trembling hand. With me the actual pierces through all the enveloping veils of art. My imagination once stimulated, I realize the whole at a flash. It is long, however, since the music in Agnes has produced upon me the ordinary effect. I never could bear the finale of Romeo and Juliet: only that of Agnes draws tears without rending my heart." Was it, then, by virtue of a rare sympathy, a kind of predilection, that she undertook, at the very last, to treat that story of Abelard and Heloise, where asceticism is crossed and penetrated by passion, and the accomplished abbeas often breathes the woes of Sappho in the words of Seneca? This earnest effort of her pen, eminently successful in its completed half, was interrupted by her death.

But if, as Mme. Guizot's sensibilities grew more refined, they acquired a kind of pensive cast, her deepening religious experience was disturbed by none of those anxieties with which religion is too often associated in serious and sensitive minds. Born a Catholic, early tainted with the indifferentism which she inhaled in the very atmosphere of the time, restored after doubts which had never been systematically hostile to a fervent Christian deism, a genuine piety, she rested here, and was at peace. She had no oppressive consciousness of the unfathomable depths of grace and salvation disclosed along her path. She simply trusted. Prayer, as an interview with a kind and omnipresent Being, strengthened and consoled her. One day, shortly after her return from Plombières, where she had vainly sought some comfort from the conversation of those about her, and had meditated long and deeply on the question whether individuality outlasts death, or the soul is absorbed in the Supreme Being, she suddenly revived from her extreme prostration, and in a voice that gathered strength by degrees, she reviewed the various opinions, and declared

her clear and confident conviction of the continuance of the soul's personality in the bosom of God. On the 1st of August 1827, at ten o'clock in the morning, her lingering illness drew near its close. She had begged her husband to read her something good, and he had read a letter of Fénelon's to an invalid, and then passed to a sermon of Bossuet on the immortality of the soul. While he was reading, she passed away. She was buried, in conformity with her own desire, with the rites of the Reformed Church, to which her husband belonged, and whose funeral service did not contradict her own simple creed. Truthful to the end, she would have nothing factitious and conventional, nothing inconsistent with her most secret thoughts, even in those last ceremonies which follow death.

She took a lively pleasure in conversation, loving it, not as an occasion for shining, but as a means of mental stimulus and exercise. Her manner may have seemed slightly brusque at first. Her inquisitive reason, as she somewhere says, searched the depths of every subject. But as her interest grew, her ideas multiplied, and, without at all intending it, she exercised a powerful influence. What more can we, who had not the honour of her personal acquaintance, say of this gifted, sagacious, exemplary, and virtuous woman, who has had no superior, in our generation, save Mme. de Staël?—and even Mme. de Staël did not excel as a thinker, but only in a few special gifts. The sentiment which she inspires is such as can be expressed only in terms of respectful admiration,—such that it seems almost a sin against one who was always intent upon being, rather than seeming, to pronounce on her behalf the words future and glory.

MADAME DE REMUSAT.

I HAVE always had a great fancy for unsuspected authors. We meet them in society, we enjoy their wit, we display our own in their presence, but without the remotest suspicion that we are associating with a writer, a man or woman of letters, none of our acquaintances, in fact, having less of that air. But there comes a time,—a summer in the country,—a season of ennui, when, life's brilliant years being over, the individual, generally the woman in question, takes up the pen. For her own behoof solely, and at first without definite aim, she composes a romance, or arranges her reminiscences, or even merely writes to her absent friends letters which are a trifle long, and none too formal. But fifty years hence, when the rest of us are all dead, when the professional *littérateur* who was the rage in his day no longer finds readers, and his thirty heavy, old-fashioned volumes lie buried in funereal catalogues, the modest, intelligent woman will be studied and enjoyed almost as much as by us her contemporaries. Her pure and vivacious utterances will be known and loved, and she will have become one of the gracious and enduring ornaments of that literature wherewith she seemed to concern herself as little as did we when at her side.

Examples of this sort of literary fate have not been unfrequent in the past, and the future, we must hope, holds a few of them in reserve. All things are not henceforth to be done professionally and deliberately, and the turn of unpremeditated efforts will come. In the refined and exclusive lineage of the de Sévigné and the de Motteville, Mme. de Rémusat will hold a prominent place, especially after her

“Memoirs of the Empire” shall have been given to the world. Meanwhile we may be permitted to claim for her the authorship of an excellent Essay on the Education of Women, which has recently been reprinted. We shall not, however, confine ourselves to the book. The individual will attract us far more powerfully, and we shall hold it an honour and a privilege to make our readers intimately acquainted with this noble-minded woman. Some of them remember her well; others have barely heard of her. Ours is the thorough knowledge which springs from long and confidential friendship. To describe her worthily and minutely would seem to many, no doubt, the natural and easy task of another writer, as fastidious as he is earnest; but filial modesty is the most delicate of all sentiments.

Claire Elizabeth Gravier de Vergennes was born at Paris in the year 1780. She was grand-niece to that minister of Louis XVI. who bore the same name. Her father, who held the office of Master of Requests, had been intendant at Auch, and occupied in Paris, on the outbreak of the Revolution, an important post, amounting to a kind of general directorship. He took part in the administration of the Commune in 1789, but was soon set aside, and perished on the scaffold in 1794. His widow (*née* Mlle. de Bastard), whose influence predominated in the education of their daughters, was a worthy woman, of an original mind, acute, lively, and extremely intelligent. Deeply moved by the experiences of her time, she seems to have been endowed with that superiority of character and insight which enables one, while comprehending life as it is, to control and make it what it should be for others. Mme. de Vergennes reared her two girls soberly and even austerely, with a view to the altered social conditions which she foresaw. The sudden diminution of importance which the family experienced on the death of the minister uncle in 1787 was her first lesson. It did not surprise her, for she had early studied her La Bruyère. She entertained a deep distrust of the Revolution, and her advice to her husband had been to quit France before matters reached a fatal extremity. He not consent-

ing, she resolved to abide by his decision, to face misfortune bravely, and to save their young family on the morrow of their disasters.

We may therefore consider that Mme. de Rémusat was fortunate in her cradle. By her first decisive circumstances of environment in infancy, there had been planted and developed within her the germs of a prudence which was to grow with her growth. Of that social medium to which she was born, as of that in which her senior, Mlle. de Meulan, grew up, it may be said (I employ, as a matter of convenience, the forcible words of another), "It was a family which had furnished high functionaries, and moved in good society, and, without exactly belonging either to the aristocratic or philosophical clique, had points of contact with them both, and gave its support, though cautiously, to the movements of the age,"—just as, in politics, M. de Vergennes had helped forward the Revolution in America, and, as a colleague of Turgot and Necker, prepared the way for the Revolution in France, without being either a *philosophe* or an innovator.

Little Claire remained under the sheltering wing and immediate authority of her mother until their severest troubles were over. Afterwards, in an extremely retired part of the country, she protracted, beside her younger sister,* her own simple, peaceful, studious childhood, approaching without anxiety the period of early youth, while the inappreciable substratum of her healthful, affectionate, solid, and yet refined character was accumulating day by day. The qualities wherewith nature had endowed her were consolidated by a slow and careful education. Her very countenance and the contour of her features announced, or rather betrayed, a little too clearly, it may be, the sober character of her private tastes, which nevertheless must not be exaggerated, for those tastes were never beyond her years. Her classic face was animated most of all by the expression of her very beautiful black eyes. The rest of her features, though not striking at first,

* Now Comtesse de Nansouty.

rather gained upon inspection, and her whole person seemed to improve the longer you regarded it. She must even then have observed that simplicity in dress to which she recurred whenever it was possible for her to do so, but which she never carried beyond the point of becoming negligence. I do not know whether then, as at a later period, she persisted in so arranging her hair as partially to conceal her forehead, which would otherwise have been very fine.

She was married at sixteen to M. de Rémusat, a former magistrate of the supreme court, and the marriage was one of affection. In this bridegroom of double her own age she found an accomplished guide and stedfast friend ; and with him, her mother, and her sister, she continued for some years after her marriage to live a life of retirement, quiet enjoyment, and intellectual culture. Quotations from Horace used sometimes to escape her, showing that, like Mme. de la Fayette and Mme. de Sévigné, she knew Latin, having learned it in that season of peaceful leisure under the tuition of her husband and beside the cradle of her son ; for she was a mother at seventeen.

Thus all things conspired to create in her an exquisite good sense and what I shall call an ornate precision of mind. The valley of Montmorency was the scene of their happiness. They lived first at Saint-Gratien, and afterwards at Sannois. I find, among the papers and notes of a somewhat later period, a regretful reference to her perfect blessedness in those days beside the mother whom she was so soon to lose. "I think I see her still," she wrote for the benefit of her son, "in the little house which you perhaps remember. My imagination paints her in the midst of us, employed upon some piece of work destined for one of her girls, enlivening our evenings by her piquant and versatile conversation ; now relating in her own original style a succession of delightful stories, or what appeared such because she lent them a charm in the telling which no one else could ever impart ; now stimulating the company by some serious discussion which she knew equally well how to prolong with interest, or terminate with merriment, as the occasion

might demand. Amid the genial pleasantries which she always had ready, there welled up at times sagacious and profound reflections which her good taste made her always careful to invest with a certain feminine hue." Without laying too much stress on the old family portrait which we have chosen for the frontispiece to our article, and which has a kind of authoritative bearing upon our whole theme,—without attempting either to explore the mysteries of transmitted mental characteristics,—does it not appear, almost at the first glance, as if the ample vitality of the mother must have admitted of division and manifold fructification among her descendants, like any rich inheritance? The daughter with whom we are at present occupied will develop the more serious, and, if I may so express myself, philosophical side of her nature. In the other we possess, we welcome back to life, I had almost said that we daily applaud, her smiling fertility of device and brilliancy of imagination; * while her natural, primitive vein, her unfailing fount of admirable wit, is not so far exhausted but it breaks out in the felicitous pungency of that grandson whom she caressed and captivated in his infancy.

There lived, at this time, at Sannois, a woman of a very different turn of mind from Mme. de Vergennes, and belonging to a far earlier generation—Mme. d'Houdetot. The estates of the two families were separated merely by a boundary wall, and they were united in the closest manner by the ties of vicinage and kindly courtesy. The intimacy which grew up between them had a lasting effect upon the mind of Mme. de Rémusat, and, to some extent, determined the social medium in which her life was passed. Mme. d'Houdetot died in January 1813, at the age of eighty-three. In the years to which we refer,—that is, the years immediately preceding 1800,—there were gathered in the salon of this charming old lady the remnants both of fashionable and philosophical society,—never, indeed, entirely exiled thence. It may be said of Mme. d'Houdetot, that

* Mme. de Nansouty is the author of a vast number of proverbs and short, popular comedies.

her ideal existence was always bounded by that Montmorency valley where the ardent devotion of Jean Jacques has engraved her memory, as it were, in immortal characters. There, again and again, her idyllic spring-time renewed its bloom, and the freshness of her impressions continued unimpaired until her dying day. She even remained in the country during the Reign of Terror, her retreat being respected, and her relatives flocking about her; and "I can readily believe," writes Mme. de Rémusat, in a charming portrait of her venerable friend, "that she retains of those frightful days, merely the memory of the increased tenderness and consideration which they procured for her." Mme. d'Houdetot was one of those spirits which may be described in a word,—they passed through life seeing its brightest side. The thing may still be done, as far as one's immediate surroundings are concerned. The blissful delusion which enwraps a loving nature possesses the power of radiation, and is imparted, temporarily at least, to surrounding objects. But I have before me, as I write, a detailed portrait, bearing for a motto these words of Massillon: "It is always love which decides man;" and from this portrait it is my intention to extract a few passages, both because its lighter tints are laid on with admirable precision, and because we shall thus become familiar with the nice and judicious observation and the pure and elegant style of the artist.

"It would hardly be possible," writes Mme. de Rémusat, "to carry, I will not say kindness, but rather benevolence, much farther than did Mme. d'Houdetot. Kindness implies a sort of discernment of evil—its recognition and pardon. Mme. d'Houdetot never observed it in any one. We have seen her actually pained at the expression in her presence of the lightest degree of blame. On such occasions she would impose silence; not sternly, but merely by showing how unpleasantly she had been affected. To this benevolent temper was due the perennial youthfulness of her feelings and her tastes. It may be that a censorious temper sharpens rather than enlarges the mind; it certainly

hardens the heart, and produces a premature disenchantment which takes all the colour out of life. Blessed is the man who dies before he is undeceived. The light, transparent veil remaining before his eyes imparts to all surrounding objects a freshness and a beauty which shall not grow dim with age. Thus Mme. d'Houdetot used to say, 'Pleasures have forsaken me, but I cannot reproach myself with having ever become disgusted with any pleasure.' This mood of mind rendered her habitually lenient, and always at her ease with the young. She allowed them to enjoy the good things which she herself had fully appreciated, and the memory of which she held dear; for she regarded with a kind of gratitude each period of her life.

"From the same expansive temperament proceeded her early and ardent fondness for the country. Eagerly welcoming all impressions, she took good care not to miss those which depend upon a pleasant site and smiling verdure. She paused in ecstasy at a point of view which pleased her, listened enraptured to the singing of birds, and dwelt with delight on a beautiful flower,—and this to the very end of life. In her youth she had opened her heart to all the world, and those tastes which she retained into the evening of her days beautified her old age as much as they had adorned that happy period when every sensation has its attendant pleasure.

"Reappearing in society when our troubles were over, she came with all her old kindness of spirit, ready, at least, to enjoy what she could. That need of loving which was always paramount with her, led her to supply the places of the friends she had lost by younger favourites, whom she selected with taste, and whose freshness of devotion made her forget her bereavements. She felt that she honoured those whom she had loved, and of whom she had been deprived, by cultivating at an advanced age her own affections. Too weak to feed, in her declining years, on memory alone, she felt the necessity of loving while she lived. By the help of a kind Providence, she was preserved in her last days from that isolation which ordinarily precedes

the end. Assiduous and delicate attentions imparted to the closing scenes of her life a colouring bright and fair as that of spring. One fond friendship* even assumed the form which the attachments she inspired had been wont to take. An austere and disenchanted reason might smile sometimes at the eternal juvenility of her heart; but the smile had nought of malice, and, to the last, Mme. d'Houdetot found in the world that affectionate indulgence which is ordinarily awarded to a winning child.

“She proved, moreover, by the fortitude and calmness evinced in her last moments, that the faculties of her heart were not enfeebled by their protracted exercise. She realized that she was dying; but, in taking her leave of a life that had been so blessed, she let fall but one expression of regret, as tender as it was affecting. ‘Do not forget me,’ she said to the relatives and friends who were weeping at her bedside; ‘I should have more courage if I had not to part from you. At least let me live in your remembrance.’ Thus did the life whose light was so soon to be extinguished flame up once more at the bidding of affection; and the words ‘I love’ were the last her soul exhaled as it passed away to God.” †

This pleasing portrait was executed by Mme. de Rémusat in 1813. Fifteen years before, she had made her first appearance in that society of the Restoration which was

* That of M. de Sommariva.

† By way of commentary and pendant to this sweet pastel, we shall take the liberty of transcribing some verses of Mme. d'Houdetot's own; for much of the poetry of the good old time is still pleasing, despite its antiquated air. It is an imitation of Marot, containing under a light disguise a tender confession. The fragment may be rendered as follows:—

“In youth I loved. Through all that bright, brief season
 Love seemed, and love alone, my days to fill;
 Then when I came to years of calmer reason,
 I minded reason's voice in loving still.
 Now I am old; the days of devastation
 Are on me, and yet happiness is mine;
 For love is still my hope and consolation:
 If love were lost, no hope for me would shine.”

made up of the *débris* of so many circles, and which set itself to smile so graciously beneath its wrinkles. Mme. d'Houdetot's salon, where the old philosophers, M. de Saint-Lambert, M. Suard, and the Abbé Morellet, still reigned, was philosophic from a literary point of view merely, and no longer politically. The Revolution had chilled and disenchanting many hearts. "Society presented," says an excellent judge, "a peaceable admixture of modern lights with reactionary views, and of old-time tastes with the simple manners induced by the misfortunes of the age and the bitter regrets incident to the woes of 1793." Men showed, above all things, a keen desire for happiness, for ultimate repose and social enjoyments. Those who would have been antagonistic ten years before consorted marvellously. Amid this intersection of ideas and sentiments, nothing hindered the free play of thought, or predetermined its direction. Young minds found in their own uprightness a means of self-restraint and an aid to progress. Men were royalists in politics in the sense that they preferred Louis XVI. to his judges, and the *émigrés* to the Jacobins; but, as a general thing, they showed themselves disposed to welcome any constituted authority, anything which promised order and repose. Such was good society under the consulate, a form of government which from the outset it recognised and hailed.

Mme. de Vergennes had always had some knowledge of Mme. Beauharnais, and their acquaintance continued after the latter became Mme. Bonaparte. They had met by chance at first in a little village in the neighbourhood of Paris, whither they had gone to pass the terrible summer of 1793; and chance had again brought them together during the expedition to Egypt. Mme. Bonaparte was then living at Malmaison, and Mme. de Vergennes came to pass a few months in the chateau of a friend at Croissy, in the immediate vicinity. The fortune of the illustrious absentee was far from being as secure at that juncture as it appears to us to-day, and his distant star seemed at intervals on the point of an eclipse. After the dazzling celebrity of the

first Italian campaign, Mme. Bonaparte, as it would seem, found herself to some extent neglected and set aside, and exposed to a thousand affronts and anxieties, amid the sumptuous remains of her first transitory grandeur. Naturally open and prone to confide in others, she had no sooner renewed her acquaintance with Mme. de Vergennes, than she contrived to make her the recipient of all sorts of confidential disclosures. In the midst of her apprehensions came the landing at Frejus, which promptly reseated her in her triumphal car. About a year afterwards, when the new government had become firmly established, Mme. de Vergennes applied to the wife of the first consul to obtain some position for her son-in-law,—a place, for instance, in the council of state,—and found her all grace and kindness. The Tuileries was reopened, and Mme. Bonaparte instantly conceived the idea of taking Mme. de Rémusat for one of her ladies-in-waiting, and thereby attaching her husband to the service of the consul. It was more than had been desired, and too much; but such favours were even then commands, and not to be disputed, and M. de Rémusat became prefect of the palace.

An attempt was being made to found a court. It was in the autumn of 1802 that Mme. de Rémusat was first established at Saint - Cloud, where the first consul then resided. She was twenty-two years of age. Her nomination and her husband's were an event in the history of that retinue which hitherto had been purely military. It betrayed the master's thought, and was his first advance towards winning persons of consideration to his court,—the first link, so to speak, in the chain which was to bind him to the civil order. There were many degrees among the old names; but that of Vergennes was familiar, historic, and associated with the old *régime*. It opened the way for greater, but as yet rebellious, names, whose bearers, however, were not found wanting when the consulate became an empire, but rather rushed forward in throngs. Besides, the consul, who liked to have that known for him which he did not know, found in M. de Rémusat a singular and unfailing

tact, as well as perfect acquaintance with the conventional usages which were to be re-established—with all, in short, which could subserve an important and delicate part of his design; for he aimed at nothing less than a restoration of the forms of polite society.

I should have too much to say, and I should say too little, were I to follow Mme. de Rémusat through that court-life into which she found herself thrust at twenty-two, after her sober and solitary youth. Gifted with prudence and maturity beyond her years, her upright soul avoided danger, and her vigorous mind gathered instruction from what she saw. The grateful and enthusiastic devotion which she had at first felt bound to show, sustained so many consecutive checks that it could not long endure. She herself has described its gradual decline in those Memoirs, the cream of which I hardly feel that I have a right to appropriate.* We shall presently encounter some of the results of her experience under the guise of fiction, where we can, at least, dilate on them with greater freedom.

One essential, and, as it were, historic, peculiarity remains to be noted. Mme. de Rémusat was one of those who talked most with the consul during these first years. To what did she owe this privilege? She herself has accounted for the fact in a half-bantering tone. She brought a frank

* She had done more than this. Having, like Mme. de Motteville an excellent place for seeing the pretty comedy then enacting, she had intended to perpetuate the impressions it produced upon her at the time. She had each evening noted down as accurately as possible the events, the emotions, and the conversations of the day. Unluckily, in 1815, during the hundred days, some peculiar circumstances, which she doubtless exaggerated, excited her alarm on the score of these papers, teeming as they were with items and with names. Veracity is almost always terrible. She sallied forth to place them in the keeping of a friend, but, failing to find her, she returned in haste and threw them into the fire. Before an hour had elapsed, she regretted what she had done. It was not until the publication of Mme. de Staël's work on the French Revolution that she felt the courage to undertake once more the collection of her reminiscences. In default of the first incomparable narrative, those will be partially indemnified who shall one day read the second.

simplicity and easy habits of conversation into that world of etiquette and watchwords, the greater number of whose denizens were at first both ignorant and timid. She admired Bonaparte, and had not yet learned to fear him. To the abrupt questions and rapid monologues with which he addressed them, the other women generally replied by monosyllables only, while she sometimes had a thought, and ventured to express it. At first this caused something very like scandal, and awakened extreme jealousy; and she was obliged to purchase forgiveness by silence on the morrow. But she could do better even than respond, when, as often happened, Bonaparte inadvertently thought aloud. She could hear, comprehend, and follow him. He was very quick to detect this sort of intelligence, and had an unbounded admiration for it, especially in a woman. Can it by chance have been because it amazed him? M. de La Mennais, in a recent production, from which one might certainly select more gracious thoughts, has said, "I never met a woman who could follow a train of reasoning for a quarter of an hour." This is very hard, and savours a little of spleen. Bonaparte was not exactly gallant, and he showed himself capable of being very severe, especially on the intellects of women; but the memory of Mme. de Rémusat would have prevented him from making a remark like this.

Different causes and circumstances soon checked this early communicativeness, and put a stop to the conversations of the hero with the woman of intelligence,—first her own realization of the uncertainty of her position, then the increasing stringency of imperial etiquette. Mme. de Rémusat's was undoubtedly too grave and active a mind for her to hear politics discussed without subsequent reflection. This the emperor perceived, and it made him suspicious. She was attached by affection as well as position to the Empress Josephine, and she felt it to be her one duty to follow the fortunes of the latter. Her health soon becoming impaired, she was unable to discharge many of the active duties of her post, simplified as these were towards

the last in the retreat of Malmaison. M. de Rémusat continued near the emperor, fulfilling the functions of his office with more of precision and conscientiousness than of ardour. They had early obtained a conspicuous position, but they were never entirely in favour. After the divorce, there was a marked and definitive withdrawal of patronage ; and their close connection with M. de Talleyrand during the last years of the empire caused the shadow of his disgrace to fall upon them.

A taste for society, as affording opportunities for conversation, and for literature, as the almost constant employment of her life, was now growing upon Mme. de Rémusat. Sober reflections occurred prematurely to her mind, and long before her youth was spent she had arrived at maturity. The note-books in which she recorded her thoughts, admit of our tracing her history in this regard far more minutely than might be supposed possible. In a journey to Cauterets, undertaken in 1806 for the benefit of her health, the solitude in which she found herself after quitting the court where her experience had been so accelerated, afforded her an opportunity of gathering up the fruits of that experience, bitter even then. Her suffering condition revived those religious ideas which had never been absent in her youth, and merely distracted in subsequent years. She prayed, she dreamed ; above all, she meditated. "Meditation," she says, "differs from reverie in being the voluntary operation of a well-regulated mind." Certain reflections which she penned at about this time, after reading those of Mme. du Châtelet on Happiness, make it apparent that her theory of morals differed as widely from the hard, selfish, calculating ethics of the friend of Voltaire, as from that purely sentimental morality which softer souls had imbibed from Rousseau. Her morality sought its support in reason, and aimed at the performance of difficult duty. Yet positive religious beliefs, and even observances (we have and can adduce the proof of what we say), blended with her ethical theories as she advanced in life, exercising a greater influence than the world, or perhaps her friends, would have

credited, though somewhat less, it may be, than *Mme. de Rémusat* herself supposed. In an excellent fragment on Coquetry, dated 1813, she needed but to consult her own observation as a moralist, her sound judgment, her refined and quiet taste, to speak as follows :—

“It is in the years between thirty and forty that women are commonly most inclined to coquetry. Younger, they please without effort, and by virtue of their very ignorance. But when their spring-time has passed, they begin to employ address in order to retain the homage which it would be painful to renounce. Sometimes they attempt to adorn themselves with a semblance of that innocence to which so much of their success was due. They are wrong. Every age has its advantages as well as its duties. A woman of thirty has seen the world, and has knowledge of evil, even if she has done nothing but good. At that age she is ordinarily a mother. Experience has long been her true safeguard. She ought, therefore, to be calm, reserved, nay, even a little cold. She must put off the grace of trustful unreserve, and assume the majestic dignity conferred by the titles wife and mother. At this crisis, she must have the courage to unclasp the zone of Venus. Consider the charms whereof the poet declares it to be composed.* Are they the ornaments of virtuous maternity ?

“But what strength it requires to be the first to lay aside an adornment like this ! With a little care it would still so well become the wearer ! Yet a few more years, and the zone will fall of itself, refusing to deck charms that are already withered. Then how would one blush at the sight of it, sadly repeating, like the Greek courtesan who consecrated her mirror to eternal beauty, ‘I give thee to Venus, for she is always fair.’

“Is it not wiser to provide in advance for our inevitable disappointment by anticipating it with courage ? The

* “There Love, there young Desire,
There fond Discourse, and there Persuasion, dwell,
Which oft enthalls the mind of wisest man.”

Lord Derby's *Iliad*. Book XIV

sacrifices which Reason dictates have this advantage, that the effort they cost is itself their reward. O mothers, gather your children about you early. Dare to say when they come into the world that your youth is passing into theirs. O mothers, be mothers, and you will be wise and happy!"

She uttered these sentences with deep feeling, with a thrilling accent, and a practical reference to herself. At that age she did, in fact, unclasp the girdle which, in her case, had enclosed none but modest graces. We have unanimous testimony to the fact that she need not so soon have relinquished it. A happy idea of her personal appearance at this time may be gathered from the very ingenious portrait of Clary, traced by a hand—I was going to say a claw—familiar, indeed, though seldom engaged in work like this, and little used to writing.* Her face, like her mind, had an enduring charm. The play of her lips, her fine teeth, and the brilliancy of her eyes, lit up her countenance as she talked. Her figure was still youthful. She was thirty-two, but she appeared twenty-eight.

She saw much in these years of Mme. de Vintimille, and of that select circle whose internal history M. Joubert has just unfolded in a manner as affectionate as it is vivacious. Society, at Mme. de Vintimille's was more and better than a sequel to the eighteenth century. In those days of universal revivification, there occurred, in certain sheltered nooks, a blossoming anew, or, if the expression be allowable, a second crop of the pure Louis Quatorze spirit. Taste ascended to remote fountains, and Religion, through her servant, M. de Chateaubriand, held up for imitation the old, sublime models. Meanwhile, outside, intelligent publishers assisted the general reaction, by reprinting collections of old memoirs, and short selections from the letters of Mme. de Montmorency, Mlle. de Scudéry, and Mme. de Coulanges; and they even tell of a clique where the ladies used to wear mourning on the anniversary of Mme. de Sévigné's death.

* One day, when M. de Talleyrand was President of the Senate, he found that the session was becoming tedious, and, seizing a sheet of official paper, he executed, in his fine handwriting, the portrait of Clary

The fashion of pen-and-ink portraits, which had never entirely passed away, seemed to revive as in the palmy days of Mademoiselle. After that of Mme. d'Houdetot, by Mme. de Rémusat, I might quote her portrait of Mme. de Vintimille, and that of M. Pasquier, who, in many respects, would seem hardly to belong to the world of to-day, sterling qualities being in him so thoroughly blended with the winning graces of society. Mme. de Rémusat, in the hours of freedom remaining to her after the discharge of those official duties which were now so greatly lightened, loved to remain at home. People came to see her regularly. Conversation flourished at her house, as in the days of the old *régime*, and her drawing-room in the Place Louis Quinze, was, to all intents and purposes, a salon of the empire. The company which had been wont to visit Mme. de Vintimille and Mme. d'Houdetot reassembled here, slightly altered and rejuvenated—M. Molé, M. Suard, the Abbé Morellet, M. de Bausset (the cardinal), M. Galloix, M. Cuvier, Mlle. de Meulan, and M. Guizot, M. de Barante occasionally, M. de Fontanes, Gérard the painter, and, later, M. Villemain. Among some autograph memorials in one of those albums, which were richer and more suggestive formerly than now, where we read the names of friends with a mixture of curiosity and sadness, intent to make out the peculiar and already remote evidence furnished by each one, I have been delighted to discover, and I hereby purloin, one luminous page, signed with the name of Chateaubriand. There are pens the slightest product of which should be carefully treasured, and not suffered to fade. M. de Chateaubriand has a grandeur even in his grace. Homer, I fancy, would have been Homer still, though reduced to the proportions of the Anthology. Here is this brilliant fragment.

“Glory, Love, and Friendship came down one day from Olympus, to visit the denizens of earth. These divinities resolved to write the history of their journey, and to record the names of those mortals who might offer them hospitality.

For this purpose, Glory provided herself with a marble slab, Love with waxed tablets, and Friendship with a blank book. The three wandered about the world, and one evening presented themselves at my door. I made haste to receive them with the reverence due the gods. When they left me on the morrow, Glory was unable to engrave my name upon her marble. Love, after having written it upon her tablets, erased it with a smile; but Friendship promised to preserve it in her book.

“DE CHATEAUBRIAND, 1813.” *

It were a grave question to determine whether Mme. de Rémusat added any new or peculiar element to the social intercourse of her time. Her aim was, undoubtedly, to introduce earnestness into society. Until then the two things had been sensibly divided. People were in earnest, if possible, in the study and in retirement, but in the world it was customary to give and receive nothing but frivolity and pure amusement. There was room, no doubt, for an attempt at compromise and reconciliation, and of

* When this was first published, M. de Chateaubriand was annoyed at being detected on friendly terms, and even high in favour, with a member of that imperial or doctrinary world which he has since regarded with constant coldness, and even antipathy. He told Mme. Récamier that he had never written in Mme. de Rémusat's album, and that the fragment was not his, and Mme. Récamier hastened to assure me of the fact. Truth, for this charming woman, was merely what her friends desired. There was but one answer to be made to M. de Chateaubriand's disavowal, and I make it unwillingly, namely, that the fragment was written in his own hand, and signed with his own name, in the book from which I had copied it. The encomiums with which I had accompanied the piece, and which he must just have read, even the great name of Homer, which I had introduced designedly, and by way of precaution, had not sufficed to exorcise a lit of ill-humour and sharp contradiction on the part of one in whom the great man was so mixed up with the man of a party and a coterie. Incredible are the pains we have to take, and the well-intentioned strategy to which we must resort, we critics who aim at enriching the contemporary history of letters on newly-raised and delicate points,—we who need to be well informed, but who will write under nobody's dictation. I have never, thank God, had to bear authority in this world, but I have had to manage the vanities of authors, and that is quite enough.

this Mme. de Rémusat must at least have dreamed. We ourselves, as professional literati, judging from a distance and by books only, should say that if Mme. de Staël introduced and maintained a kind of high-flown earnestness, and if Mme. Guizot did not shrink from a logical, and, at times, disputatious earnestness, Mme. de Rémusat aimed at an earnestness at once more uniform and more gentle than theirs. But distinctions of this sort are mere formulas, drawn up after the event, and for the use of posterity. I make haste to abandon all such, for I seem to see those contemporaries who would have been the only competent and reliable witnesses in this case, smiling at my attempt.

In any history (unhappily well-nigh impossible) of conversation in France, a single circumstance would suffice to illustrate the quality and assign the rank of Mme. de Rémusat (and consider, only, what a blending of seriousness and grace that circumstance implies): she was probably the woman with whom both Napoleon and M. de Talleyrand liked best to talk.

I have just said that the history of conversation, like that of all which is essentially relative and transitory, and dependent for the most part upon passing impressions, seems to me impossible. Where could the material for such a work be sought, and how could its limits be defined? Even if the things said could be accurately transferred to writing, they would become congealed in the process, for paper cannot smile.* Nothing so well illustrates the taste of a time as its prevalent style of conversation. The serious discussions of yesterday would seem a trifle timorous, or superficial, or insipid by to-morrow, were echo to report them faithfully. The refined and polished conversation of one period will appear heavy to another. Mme. de Rémusat

* The objection has been urged against Collections of Thoughts, that when they are not commonplace they often appear pretentious; yet the same things would have struck us far otherwise, if we had heard them said. The smile and accent of the speaker would have won them acceptance; but fix them upon paper and it is quite another thing. Paper is brutish.

has ingeniously remarked in the eleventh chapter of her *Essay on Education*, "If we attempt to determine the auspicious moment when the conversation of the past arrived at ideal perfection, it eludes our grasp, and escapes into the distance, like every golden age. Mme. du Deffand and Mme. du Châtelet deplore the manners of men, and Mme. de Lambert declares that they have lost the true tone. Mme. des Houlières believes that we must go back to Bassompierre, and Mme. de La Fayette, in her romance, removes the date to the times of the Valois. Hence I would fain infer, that in this respect even our own case is not entirely desperate, for all our habitual lamentations. When one regrets so keenly the delights of conversation (just as when one is beset by moral scruples), one is near deserving a favourable exception, and snatching a few happy moments. And, after all, who ever had more ?

And now that I am on the subject of introducing a graver element into social intercourse, I desire to note, in passing, one consequence which might ensue—the more so as it is especially a literary consequence. Shall I venture to say, then, that to have the perpetual surface current of society deeper and more even, would not be an unmixed advantage ? From the writer's point of view it would be decidedly inconvenient, were there any greater uniformity than at present between what is spoken and what is written. We speak with more of warmth, we write with less. The tact and propriety assumed with the pen are not always to the writer of talent an adequate compensation for what he resigns. Were it customary, therefore, to say the things which we intend to write, our ideas would perhaps be rendered more flexible ; but they would also suffer a premature loss of strength and colour, and we should write with less of freshness even than now. "We should not," as some one has very wittily said, "be thrilled, some fine morning, by the discovery of truth ; we should seem to have known it from all eternity." Yet society would gain in interest, and afford nobler employment for our leisure ; and, in short, those persons for whom it is neither an accident,

a thoroughfare, nor a place of forcible detention, but an habitual and necessary residence, must needs make the most of it—must even think and reflect aloud therein, for fear of not finding time to reflect at all. Now, thinking aloud before the world, operating upon our ideas in presence of witnesses, is a brilliant exercise, a most fascinating amusement, which comes, finally, to supersede all others. Chaste, collected, earnest thought is scared away by it. Such thought is shy and proud. Then, too, one must study as well as think aloud. The style is sharpened; it gains in pungency, rapidity, and interest, but it loses originality and depth. Sensibility and imaginative power, a reticent and fastidious mode of expression, are not so acquired and preserved. M. de Buffon knew this well, and too well. Outside the castle of Montbar he was not lavish of these gifts.

To resume our narrative: Mme. de Rémusat's taste had always been decidedly literary. She had written early with facility and grace. Short essays of hers have been discovered, composed at the age of fifteen or sixteen, as well as novelettes and attempted translations and even versions, of some of the Odes of Horace. Every night for years she committed to paper a graphic narrative of the day's events. All her life she wrote many and long letters, the greater part of which have been preserved and may yet be collected. I shall, however, allude only to her romances, of which she composed several, and two of which I have read. The first, entitled "Charles and Claire, or the Flute," was published in 1814. The plot is graceful and peculiar. In a certain German town, two French *émigrés*, neighbours, a youth and a maiden, become enamoured without ever having seen one another. The young man is in feeble health, but usually plays the flute in the evening after he returns to his rooms. The young girl, who lodges in the convent hard by, and has the care of her invalid grandmother, writes him one day,—having understood that he is French,—and begs him not to play at certain hours, because it disturbs her grandmother, while at the same time she entreats him not to desist en-

tirely, since, at other times, it is a great diversion both to the poor lady and herself. Subsequently, of this vague intercourse, begun by musical sounds and carried on by letters,—sundry sufficiently natural accidents all the while preventing a meeting,—there is born such a love as might be expected to arise between two very young, very pure, and very unhappy beings. The little servant, Marie, who acts as messenger to the young man, answers his few questions, thereby giving shape to the lover's dreams, while she stimulates his imagination. The maiden resolves to show the letters to her father when he comes, and he is daily expected. Reassured by this thought, she continues the correspondence. The flute, discoursing at regular intervals its most affecting music, is their real rendezvous. The young man talks of our little concerts, and, although he is the sole performer, he is right, for their hearts are in unison. On one occasion, a few of the airs of Languedoc, happily chosen, draw tears from the old lady's eyes, and awaken moving reminiscences, though her memory is weak; on another,—it is Claire's birthday,—royalist airs are not wanting,—“*Charmante Gabrielle*” and “*Richard ô mon roi!*”—and the tender passion of these two is redoubled by being associated with the loves of their ancestors. Finally, the young man, who is reading Werther, becomes excited, his letters grow more ardent, and the whole thing would have been spoiled, had not the maiden's father sent one of his sisters to the spot in his stead, to remove her niece before the ensuing day. The poor child has barely time to warn the amiable and devoted neighbour, whom she has never seen. She is to leave at five o'clock in the morning, and for a moment,—a second, merely,—between the convent-sill and the step of the post-chaise, the young man tries to obtain a first and last sight of her; but the handkerchief, which she presses to her eyes in the emotion caused by her friend's presence, conceals her face, and the moment is lost. She has, at least, dropped the handkerchief, which he seizes; but she is gone for ever. Here we have what seems a very pretty conception: two sister souls, separated by a partition, a mere

veil, divining one another from the first, but never meeting face to face. Perhaps, however, it is an idea more striking to broach than to unfold—more suited to a chapter in the “*Sentimental Journey*,” or the “*Voyage autour de ma Chambre*,” than to a development in the form of letters. The reader may remember, in the *Memoirs of Silvio Pellico*, the mere outline of a touching romance in connection with that repentant Magdalene, whom he simply hears chanting canticles through his prison wall. But here the romance remains, so to speak, in the air,—in the condition of the Virgin’s thread, floating as a pure dream. Mme. de Rémusat has very well arranged and rendered probable the sequence of her various little scenes. Her style is always elegant and pure, but there are places where I should prefer, if not more brilliancy, at least a little negligence, and a less premeditated air. This novel is very nearly worthy of a place with some of the pleasing productions of Mme. Riccoboni and Mme. de Souza ; but it lacks a certain down of youth,—of faded youth, even ;—or rather, I would say, in all simplicity, that it seems to have been kept too long in the drawer, and so failed to blossom in its season for want of air and sunshine.

In works of this sort, especially, —works which have colour and a blossom,—there is an estimable difference between fading in a drawer and fading in the open air. Works which are in the latter case—and it is the common lot even of the best—may be said to have had their day. They won the public once for all, and produced a certain impression. There is gradation in their very decay. They grow old harmoniously.

The second of Mme. de Rémusat’s novels to which I shall allude—“*The Spanish Letters, or the Minister*”—is a composition of another and more important order. Commenced in 1805, at the imperial court, it was afterwards laid aside and not completed until 1820. In the course of the work we find traces of the successive modifications which its author’s ideas underwent, for the ever austere mind of Mme. de Rémusat was growing and ripening continually.

She had been all ready for the first Restoration. Toward the close of the empire the general fatigue and indifference of mind became very great. For herself she had seen its springs too near, and touched them too often, to have escaped disgust at its workings. For years she had been in the habit of discussing these things confidentially with the greatest convert of the day. It was then with a feeling of hope and a certain revival of old memories, that she welcomed the restoration of an order of things whereby the position which she had won would at least be lowered and perhaps forfeited. The little story of the two young *émigrés*, published in 1814, shows clearly enough, in some of its details, the Bourbon tinge which her thoughts had then assumed. But the excesses and absurdities of the royalist reaction, especially during the year 1815, brought her back to juster views and sounder opinions. The idea of a constitutional government recurred to the public mind as if it had been new, and her vigorous intellect embraced it at the outset in its widest acceptance. During the struggle which ensued, the conditions of a new order of society and a laborious future were unmasked on all hands, and to these she applied a mother's meditative forethought. The main results of her final experience were to be summed up in her work on female education; but the "Spanish Letters" also gained thereby; and the first conception of the romance was enlarged by her fuller observation of men and things.

The original aim of the story had probably been merely to analyze and describe the embarrassments in love of a young Spaniard, Don Alphonso d'Alovera, placed between two charming girls, one of whom he loves, while his ambition counsels him to prefer the other. The general tone might, I imagine, have been indicated by thoughts like this: "Why must the prudence that suspects ever prevail over the confidence that hopes? Why should all the arrangements of society combine to disturb the heart's true joy?" But as the work proceeds, this idea is enlarged and transformed. The young lover finds himself mixed up in great events. The minister, the father of Inez, whom he is

expected to love, occupies a larger space, and the author exceeds her first plan in the delineation of his character. Walter Scott's novels had by this time crossed the Channel, and people began to think of fidelity in the reproduction of places and of periods. Here the historic conception was originally vague. The reign was not designated, and the minister was merely described in general terms; but Mme. de Rémusat, while pursuing this plan, has succeeded in imparting a life-like colouring to her pictures, and in producing genuine Spaniards, a genuine court, and genuine monks. There is a Jesuit father who speaks and acts to perfection. Thus we have a long romance in the epistolary form, elaborate, sensible, regular, of moderate but ever-increasing interest, the characters well studied and consistent, the situations prolonged and complicated, but clearly defined and perfectly resolved. I find here the customs of the world and the refinements of sentiment mingled in proportions which are neither wholly worldly nor ideally romantic. The writer is evidently one who knows the heart, who perfectly understands what courts really are, and who does not tell all. We detect under altered names a transcript or reflection of her own successive impressions during her palace life. How can we fail to be reminded of her enthusiastic *début*, in 1802, when Don Alphonso exclaims, after a flattering remark of his sovereign, "Oh, my sister, what a force and potency the words of kings possess! How binding on us are the slightest testimonials of their favour! A little mark of kindness, a proof of their remembrance, often decides our destiny. The devotion of an entire lifetime is the response we feel we owe for the faintest manifestation of interest on their part." It would be very surprising were there no reminiscences of the Pyrenees, and of their hither side too, in the description of that rural life planned by the queen, when the king is ill, to afford him repose and to divert his mind from business and etiquette. "In fact, as soon as we arrived at Aranjuez, the king announced that, having perfect confidence in our reverence for himself, he should suspend all ceremonial, and every one would be at

liberty to follow the dictates of his own fancy. You, my sister" (this is one of Alphonso's letters), "who are sometimes disposed to ridicule us courtiers a little, could not have failed to be amused at the embarrassment into which we were thrown by this declaration. True, it was made with that austere gravity which the king knows not how to lay aside. Improvisation is always rather difficult to manage, and especially improvised freedom. I must confess that we hardly know what to do with ours. Imagination dared not be very active in this matter, and our sovereigns themselves strove in vain to effect that which they had had power to permit. So, despite the favourable disposition both of master and subjects, things went on much as usual, and on our return to Madrid, each voluntarily took up his old habits, resuming, along with their former apartments, some the right to command, and others the right to obey."* And the reflections which follow are perfectly and deplorably just. "In reality, my sister, the court ceremonial, of which so much complaint has been made, seems to me to have its use, and even its moral value. With the people who surround a prince, personal interest is so alert, and the baser human passions are so frequently aroused, that if it were necessary for us to act upon our real feelings and sensations, we should present a sad spectacle to the observer. Etiquette hides all this with a uniform veil. It is like correct time in music, which makes even discordant sounds appear harmonious."

In this court there is a certain Comtesse de Lemos, a clever woman who dares to be herself, and to care little for what people think of her. "The independent attitude," says one author, "which she succeeds in preserving, has sometimes made me fancy that even in this reticent court, it might not be as difficult as we suppose to allow ourselves

* One day the emperor had the comedians of some of the smaller theatres come and play before him. Whatever the occasion may have been, he permitted and even desired more of gaiety than was customary in these court performances. M. de Talleyrand, as grand chamberlain, signified, with his most solemn visage, his master's august desire,—

Gentlemen, the emperor earnestly requests you to be amused.

perfect freedom of speech if we would first consent to allow other people perfect freedom of conjecture." In fact, the world is quite ready to suppose a great deal. Don Alphonso has had the happiness of saving the queen's life, when on a hunt, and she has testified her gratitude with a vivacity which for once transcends the bounds of etiquette: hence he is supposed to be a favoured lover. It is for the minister's interest, and a part of his policy, that this supposition should gain credence, and Alphonso, to say the least, allows it. The subtle art with which his able patron attempts to inoculate him with this idea; the careless, casual manner in which he informs him of the current report; the revulsion of feeling, and the indignation manifested at the outset by Alphonso, who, however, is gradually imbued with the spirit of his part, and almost undertakes to perform it,—these things are skilfully touched. Throughout the romance the prime minister displays as much honesty as would befit one who on all needful occasions shows himself opposed to romance and sentiment. Judging from numerous scenes, and from the permanent basis of the character, we opine that M. de Talleyrand must often have furnished the model; but the portrait, though recognised with extreme ease, seems on the whole to have been somewhat softened and flattered by friendship. Those impassive features, too well trained to betray even triumph; that half-kindly, half-mocking tone, which is habitual with him; the sweetness which is perhaps only an additional ruse,—these are items in the description which can apply to him alone. The author is far from denying to the Spanish minister all loveable qualities. "We frequently err in judgment through our inclination to believe that a man must be thoroughly and entirely what he is in the main. There is no such unity in nature; and because the life of a court, and familiarity with its intrigues, may have blunted the sensibilities of a given individual, we must not conclude that they are wholly destroyed." One day, after a luxurious dinner given by the minister in question, the conversation took a remarkably interesting turn. "It is strange," re-

marks one of the characters in the story, "but thanks to that independence of mind of which the minister gives us all an example, his diplomatic guests never seem to be studying how they may make their words as meaningless as possible. I said as much to the duke at night, when all the company had left. 'I think,' he replied, 'it is a sign of mediocrity, as well as of disdain, in a statesman, to allow no serious question to be discussed in his presence. There is a good deal of important information which can only be acquired through conversation. But one must know how to resist the fascinations which attend it; for there is certainly a species of intoxication about the pleasures of the mind as well as about those of the body.'" The minister's wily plot, while it fails to ruin the fortunes of those dearest to him, does but slightly retard his own fall. His old friend, the Comtesse de Lénos, had once said to him, "Beware of intrigue! When it becomes complicated it ceases to be a means, and is only an additional impediment." At the time of his retirement, when he travels through the fair country which he had not seen for so long, and on which he fixes his softened gaze with the shadow of a smile, I recognise one sublime thought. "In all the troubles which await us there comes one terrible moment which must be met, and which we must make haste to overpass. It is a dark and difficult passage—a kind of porch between despair and resignation. I would give it an inscription the very opposite of that which Dante places over the gates of hell. Once beyond it, the mind grows calm, and we measure our losses and perceive the consolations that remain. For a retiring minister that moment should come in the first day or the first night after his disgrace." Let us hope that all ministers who have fallen, or are yet to fall, may work in one day through this subterranean passage, which, like that of Posilippo, will quickly lead them to the sight of fairer skies.

I have not intended to do more than glance cursorily at a subject of which all cannot judge as well as I, and where it would take too long to adduce the proofs of what I say.

For this purpose I should have needed to quote some of those truly tender and affecting scenes, where the queen, fettered by etiquette, and deceived by the semblance of that affection which all the world attributes to Alphonso, betrays her feminine weakness in his presence, and cannot restrain her tears. In short, the "Spanish Letters" is a very beautiful study, though it might need something besides notoriety to make it a beautiful romance.

We come now to Mme. de Rémusat's last work—the "Letters on Female Education," published by her son. As a general thing, serious and intelligent women are struck in their youth by the obstacles which the world opposes to genuine sentiments and natural affections, and later with the impediments which are encountered by their sex in the way of connected thought, study, and profound application. Hence when young they are moved to compose sentimental novels, and at a later period to elaborate plans of education. In Mme. de Rémusat's case, a multitude of considerations helped to give the last-named turn to her maturer efforts. The Revolution had altered the condition of the different orders of society, and in some sort displaced the centre of power which was tending to become fixed in the middle classes. But civil disturbances and the ensuing splendours of the empire had concealed this result, and not until the advent of the Restoration was it indicated with any degree of clearness. The sudden return to certain superannuated usages, and the attempts to wrest the new central point, excited revolt, and rendered its situation more evident than before. Mme. de Rémusat, who had been to some extent distracted by the great events which she had seen so near, suddenly found herself, with her meditative turn of mind, face to face with these new and unforeseen questions, and in a position to be not merely keenly interested, but thoroughly informed about them. Her place and that of her husband were now in the constitutional party of the Restoration. Their shade of opinion coincided with that of the then centre-left. M. de Rémusat, who had been appointed prefect of Toulouse in 1815, and of Lille in 1814,

was to retain his place until removed by minister Villèle as a first reactionary measure. This provincial life, although not without frequent breaks, allowed Mme. de Rémusat increased leisure, while she still kept up an intimate acquaintance with the stirring world of Paris through the precocious son who was just entering society, and who corresponded freely with his mother. He even brought her new friends, and she found congenial spirits in M. and Mme. Guizot, and in M. de Barante. He also introduced her to Mme. de Broglie, of whom unfortunately she saw little, but for whom, during her last years, she cherished a sincere and tender friendship. If the noblest need of a reverent and pious son is to have his mother for prime confidant and companion, such a relation is also a most affecting restorative of a mother's youth. However intellectual she may be, her happiest fate is to understand all things through the heart. The peculiar affinity between mothers and sons has often been remarked. Through their sons mothers acquire greater mental courage; with them they willingly undertake journeys and conflicts; then they follow into realms of new ideas. The refined and placid woman, accustomed to the amenities of society, and content with them, whose mind is earnest and cultivated, and who scarce ever dreamed of transgressing the limits of her graceful horizon, is suddenly transformed. At the very season of repose, at the moment when the intellect is most prone to pause, and the heart to mourn and pine for all that is passing away, she, on the contrary, revives; she is kindled by new views, and greets them with a smile; she adopts projects of reform; and, instead of turning her back on the future, she hastens to meet it as in the morning of her days, accompanying, or rather preceding, her beloved guide. To see her from afar so light and active, you would declare her to be his sister.

Like Mme. Necker de Saussure and Mme. Guizot, Mme. de Rémusat was deeply concerned for the future of her sex in that new society about to be established upon the quivering bases of the old. I shall not examine in detail a book

which any reader will appreciate. The whole aim and spirit of the work are moral, earnest, graceful. We feel the presence in it of a peculiar inspiration, a kind of secret muse. One must be a mother to yearn thus tenderly over coming generations ; and when she drew her ideal wife she was thinking of her son.

In the year 1820, therefore, Mme. de Rémusat was in the full maturity of her powers, and her opinions, though still active, had attained their final development. Her manners had become very simple, and even sprightly, and she is said to have been wonderfully easy in conversation. She was fond of all that is fresh and youthful ; a little inclined to raillery ; pious, or rather, a Christian, making no great show of fervour, but decided, and deriving support from definite doctrines. Although old before her time, her health seemed better than formerly, or, at least, allowed her greater freedom of action. She was leading a life of domestic privacy, very happy, and entirely devoted to the happiness of her family, when she was prematurely taken from them in December of 1821. In a little autograph album of "Thoughts," I have found some precious revelations concerning the continuous development of her religious emotions, the distraction of her mind during her years of levity, and the reaction which she subsequently experienced. It is the complete history of an inner life, a vein hidden from the world, and unsuspected. Let us not be too ready to pass judgment on these mysteries of the soul. It is a consoling thought that if we do not divine all the transient evil in the world, neither do we suspect all the good. After she went to Caunterets for her health, in 1806, her Christian experience was revived, and never afterwards wholly interrupted. We can trace its progress through this private compilation by successive extracts from Fénelon, Pascal, Bossuet, Nicole, and Saint Augustine, and by prayers which she had composed herself, or which had been furnished her by Mme. de Vintimille. She also took a copy of Mme. de Maintenon's beautiful letter to the Duchess de Ventadour. But these things relate

merely to what she called her partial enlistment. The great event of her interior life, her complete reconciliation with God, occurred in April 1812. Her own serious illness at the beginning of that same year, and subsequently that of her son, awakened her anxiety and ended her indecision. Easter was approaching, and she resolved to apply to the judicious Abbé Le Gris Duval. She slightly exaggerated the preliminaries of religion, the difficulty of its duties, the necessity of an extraordinary ordeal. We venture—looking not so much to her praise as to the profit of some who may read—to lift a corner of the sacred veil: “Thou, O my God, hast permitted my transient presence in this world, whither we are summoned for a brief and painful journey. At its end we shall return to Thee. How wilt Thou then receive me, when I tremblingly present before Thy holy tribunal the story of a life almost empty of good works! Shall I dare plead before Thee those feeble virtues for which foolish men extolled me, knowing not that they were unaccompanied by sacrifice? Shall I boast that I was virtuous, and have Thee remind me how happy I have been? Can I dilate on trifling charities which cost me no privations! Shall I say that I did not hate my enemies, when Thou didst permit my heart to be entirely occupied with gentler feelings? What would become of me, wert Thou to reproach me with having been puffed up with my felicity! wert Thou to tell me that I was proud of having been so happy as a daughter, wife, and mother! Ah, then I should bitterly remember that I had neglected to give thanks to my Creator for all the blessings he had bestowed on me!” But the Abbé Duval answered in his own simple, persuasive tones, “You say you are happy. Why, then, distress yourself! Your happiness is a proof of God’s love towards you. And if, in your heart, you truly love Him, can you refuse to respond to the divine benevolence! Religion, save in peculiar cases, demands a life of action. It is easier, believe me, to yield the heart to love and peace in retirement, than to serve God in the world. To succeed in the last-named career is a work of genuine piety. Engrave

upon your conscience this fundamental truth—that religion demands order above all things, and that since the institutions of society have been allowed and consecrated, there is encouragement for those duties by the performance of which they are maintained. . . . But especially banish from your mind the error that our pains alone are acceptable to God. A general willingness to bear trial is enough. Never fear but life and time will bring it. Dispose yourself beforehand to resignation, and meanwhile thank God incessantly for the peace that pervades your lot.”

These wise words calmed her mind, and by them it is probable that she ultimately regulated her inner line of conduct. These humble prayers of Mme. de Rémusat recall others equally thrilling by Mme. de Duras. We love to hear the gentlest and the most unquiet souls declare their longing for the self-same port. But I must pause, my intention having been to approach this subject on its more fathomable side, and to recommend to the reader's careful study one of the most earnest, the most refined, the most intelligent, and most docile minds, bequeathed by the old social order to the new.

Amid a variety of well-sustained characters, amid critics, literary historians, and biographers, it has seemed well to me to preserve some record of one whose motto might have been to introduce as far as possible, and fix for the first time in literature, what previously had had no footing there,—a knowledge of the world derived from actual experience.



FREDERIC THE GREAT.

FREDERIC THE GREAT

THE works of Frederic have not hitherto obtained in France the high esteem they merit. People have ridiculed certain bad verses of that metromaniac prince, which are not worse, after all, than many other verses of the same time which passed for charming, and which cannot be read again to-day ; and one has not paid sufficient attention to the serious works of the great man, who would not resemble other great men if he had not really set his seal to numerous pages, historical and political, which he has written, and which form a vast whole. As for the letters of Frederic, one has done them more justice ; in reading in the Correspondence of Voltaire those which the king addressed to him, intermingled with those which he received in return, we find that not only do they bear the comparison very well, but that, while equal intellectually, they have also a superiority of view and of sense which is due to force of soul and of character. It is our business to-day to abandon the little ideas of a rhetoric altogether too literary, to recognise the man and the king in the writer, and to welcome him as one of the best historians we possess.

I say we, for it was in French that Frederic wrote ; it was in French that he thought ; it was the French, again, that he had in mind, and whom he addressed in order to be read, even when he wrote down judgments and related actions which were little fitted to please them. Frederic is a disciple of our good authors, and, in history, he is a pupil, and certainly an original and unique pupil, and in passages a proficient pupil, of the historian of the Age of Lewis XIV.

The negligence and incorrectness with which the works

of Frederic were previously printed, had something to do with the slight esteem in which those persons seemed to hold them who are not accustomed to judge for themselves upon every subject. One cannot imagine to what an extreme the infidelity and the licence of the editors had in this respect been carried. I will cite but a single example, which has remained secret till to-day. In France, in 1759, during the Seven Years' War, one had thought of printing the works of the Sans-Souci Philosopher (that was the title which Frederic had taken in his poems and his first literary efforts). But M. de Choiseul, minister, wrote at that date to M. de Malesherbes, director of the library, on the very subject of this project, and on the request which some Parisian publishers had made that they might print the Collection they had obtained of the works of Frederic : *

"MARLY, December 10.

"It is important, sir, that the king's minister should not be in any degree compromised, nor suspected of having tolerated the publication of the works of the king of Prussia. So, in case that M. Darget (reader and secretary of the king of Prussia) comes to speak to me of the matter, I shall earnestly assure him that I have no knowledge of the printing, and that I am going to get the king's order to prevent its being executed in France. While I am waiting for M. Darget, I hope that the publication will be made, and that all will be said . . ."

The publication, at once protected and clandestine, was then made ; but it is curious to see how M. de Choiseul set himself to falsifying it, going so far as to point out with his own hand the details of the corrections and modifications to be introduced into it :

"It cannot be permitted" (the Collection), he wrote, "except the greatest precautions be taken that it may appear to have been printed in a foreign country, and this consideration must not be lost sight of in requiring corrections.

"For this reason I have proposed but two sorts of corrections ; one sort, those which may be made without one's perceiving them in reading the text. As these changes relate only to some impieties of the most decided character, or to strictures upon great personages,

* This Collection had been printed in Prussia in 1750 and in 1752 ; but these two first editions, which were wholly confidential, were limited to a very few copies, destined only for the king's friends.

there is no reason to fear that the king of Prussia will complain that the text has been altered, and the public will not be able to discover it. But in suppressing passages, I have carefully avoided making any substitutions; that would be a censurable infidelity.

"The other corrections are the suppressing of proper names, the place of which you will supply with points or stars. This is no more what I call an infidelity, than are the other changes. It is, perhaps, even a regard for the king of Prussia."

One sees that the minister who drove away the Jesuits knew how to practise shuffling when necessary, and secretly to alter a text while declaring that it was not an infidelity. Later, in the publication of the posthumous historic writings of the king of Prussia, exactness, for a thousand reasons, was no better observed, and one may say, in considering the edition which is published to-day at Berlin by order of the Prussian Government, and in comparing it with its predecessors, that the works of Frederic appear to-day for the first time in a text that is authentic and worthy of recognition.

The edition undertaken by the Prussian Government, and which will comprise not less than thirty quarto volumes, is monumental. It is thus that one day, and soon, France should publish the works of Napoleon, works to-day scattered, or collected without method and without order; not falsified, but, in general, printed almost as negligently as have hitherto been those of Frederic. The monument of Napoleon's tomb will not be complete till one shall have added to it the national edition of his works. Be this as it may, the Prussian Government and the reigning king have thought that their honour was concerned in publishing a complete collection of the writings of the man who was altogether the greatest king and the first blessed of his country. Some clever savants have been charged with the execution of this project; M. Pruss, historiographer of Brandenburg, is at their head. The historic portion of Frederic's works has justly had precedence over the other writings; it forms seven volumes, of which five are before me. I have made their acquaintance, and I have examined them with all the care of which I am capable.

That I may not have to come back to these details of

editions, I may be permitted at the outset to make two or three remarks. The text, typographically, is admirable. The titles are in the highest taste; the portraits are fine: I find nothing to disapprove but the kind of vignettes which terminate the pages at the ends of the chapters, and which make this royal volume resemble at times a book of illustrations: these embellishments, of which the subject is often enigmatical, are not in keeping with the monumental gravity of the edition. As for the text, I have said that it is for the first time exact and faithful: many bold thoughts have been restored, many energetic and vivid phrases which the prudence or the literary prudery of the first editors had effaced or softened. I could have wished, however, that one had not pushed his scrupulousness so far as carefully to restore faults of grammar. Of what use is it, for example, to make the king say that M. du Lowendal *was* marched to a certain point, instead of saying that he *had* marched? Frederic, before publishing his work, would have had these trifles corrected by some of his French academicians at Berlin. Another fault of this edition, and a grave fault, is that it lacks strategic maps and plans of places, which renders the reading of these campaigns tedious and sterile to the majority of readers. Why not join to these histories of Frederic an atlas expressly prepared, of the same kind as that which M. Thiers has executed for his "History of Napoleon"? Finally, if it is permissible to enter into these minutiae, which do not fail to have their importance with the reader, I will complain, in the name of France, that there does not exist in Paris a single complete copy of the volumes thus far published. The National Library has but five volumes; the Library of the Institute does not possess one of them. The king of Prussia, who distributes this magnificent edition, has forgotten our Institute of France in his largesses. It is there that the great Frederic would have begun.*

* Along with the great quarto edition, there is published one of smaller size, for the use of common readers; this small edition, which is sold, is easier to find.

I have said all I wish touching these details, which are in some sort external, and I come from them to the great man, whom one is happy in being able at length to study more closely and with confidence in his successive acts and writings. Frederic, in spite of the wrong he has done himself by some of his rhapsodies and speeches, by the placarded cynicism of his impieties and jeers, by that versifying manner which always provokes a smile, is a really great man, one of those rare geniuses who are manifestly born to be the chiefs and leaders of the people. When we strip his person of all the anecdotal drolleries upon which the light-minded feast, and when we go straight to the man and to the character, we pause with admiration and with respect; we recognise at the first instant, and at every step we take with him, a superior and a master, firm, sensible, practical, active, and indefatigable, inventive in proportion to his necessities, penetrating, never duped, deceiving as little as possible, constant in all fortunes, governing his personal affections and passions by patriotic sentiment and zeal for the greatness and advantage of his nation; unmeasured of glory, while judging it; vigilantly careful and jealous of the amelioration, honour, and well-being of the populations which are entrusted to him, even at the very time when he has little esteem for men.

Of Frederic as a captain, it is not for me to judge; but if I have well understood the observations which Napoleon has made on Frederic's campaigns, and the simple recitals of Frederic himself, it seems to me that he was not chiefly a warrior. He has nothing, on that side, very brilliant or fascinating at first view. Often beaten, often at fault, his greatness is shown in learning through trials; especially in repairing his faults or those of fortune by coolness, tenacity, and an immovable steadiness of soul. Whatever eulogium good judges may pass upon his battle of Leuthen, and on some of his great manœuvres and operations, they have still more criticisms to make on many and many an occasion. "He was great especially in critical moments," said Napoleon; "it is the finest eulogium one can pass

upon his character." This moral character it is which is conspicuous in Frederic as a warrior, and which transcends his martial greatness ; it was the case of a strongly-tempered soul and a great mind applying itself to war because it must do so, rather than the case of a born warrior. He had neither the rapid and lightning-like valour of a Gustavus Adolphus or a Condé, nor that transcendent geometrical faculty which characterized Napoleon, and which that powerful genius applied to war with the same ease and the same aptitude that Monge applied it to other objects. Endowed with a superior genius, with a character and a will in unison with his genius, Frederic applied himself to the military art as he applied himself to many other things, and he was not slow in excelling it, in possessing himself of it, in perfecting his command of his instruments and means, although it was not, perhaps, at first, a calling for which his genius fitted him, and he was not in his proper element.

Nature had made him, before all things else, to reign, to be a king, with all the functions which that lofty employment demands ; and war being one of the most indispensable of these functions, he devoted himself to it, and he mastered it. "One must catch the spirit of his calling," he wrote in jest to Voltaire, amid the Seven Years' War. This has the air of a joke only, yet it is true. In Frederic the will and the character directed the mind in everything.

Generally, one did not perceive in any of the qualities of Frederic that primal freshness which is the brilliant sign of the singular gifts of nature and of God. All, in him, seems the conquest of will and deliberation acting upon a universal capacity, which they lead hither or thither, according to different exigencies. He is clearly the great king of his time ; he has the stamp of the age of analysis.

One has sought to establish a contradiction between the conversations and writings of Frederic, as an adept in philosophy, and his actions as king and conqueror. I do not find this contradiction so great as some have wished to make out. I lay aside certain essays and certain sallies of Frederic, when very young and prince-royal ; but, from the

very moment that he understood his part as king, I find him true. And I do not see, for example, in the histories which he has written, a single word which he has not justified in his conduct and in his life. He says :

“A prince, in my opinion, is the first servant and the first magistrate of the State; he should account to it for the use which he makes of the imposts. He raises them that he may be able to defend the State with the troops he maintains; in order to defend the dignity with which he is clothed, to recompense services and merit, to establish in some way an equilibrium between the rich and the debtor classes, to comfort in every way the unhappy of every class, to invest with magnificence all that interests the body of the State in general. If the sovereign has an enlightened mind and a heart that is right, he will direct all his expenditures to the promotion of the public good and the greatest advantage of the people.”

This is what Frederic almost always really did in peace and in war, and he varied from this policy as little as possible. After making every deduction for his faults, for his ambitious acts, and for his personal misdeeds, the sum and substance of his policy remains still what we have just seen, and what he has so well described. To judge him as a politician, we must get rid of the French point of view, of the French illusions, and of what is left to us of the atmosphere of the Choiseul ministry. Open once more Frederic's *Memoirs*; in writing them he never seeks to varnish the truth. I know of no man who, when he takes his pen, is less a charlatan than he; he gives his reasons without any colouring whatever; “a borrowed part,” he thought, “is difficult to sustain; a person can never well be anybody but himself.” In writing the history of his house under the title of “*Memoirs of Brandenburg*,” he gives us the meaning, the first inspiration, the key of his actions. Prussia had not come really to count for anything in the world, and to put, as he says, its grain into the political balance of Europe, till the time of the Great Elector, which corresponded with the prosperous days of Lewis XIV. In reciting the history of that clever and brave sovereign, who to the mediocre fortune of an Elector knew how to unite the heart and the merit of a great king,—in speaking to us of that

prince, "the honour and the glory of his house, the defender and the restorer of his country," who was greater than his sphere of action, and from whom his posterity reckon,—Frederic has evidently found his ideal and his model; what the Great Elector was, as simply a prince and member of the empire, Frederic will be to it as king.

This title, this appellation of king, which was given only to the son of the Great Elector, and, as it were, by grace, appears rather to have degraded than to have exalted the Prussian name. The first Frederic who bore it, a slave to ceremony and etiquette, had rendered the title of Majesty almost ridiculous in his person; he was crushed by it. That first king of Prussia, by his entire life of vain pomp and display, said, without knowing it, to his posterity: "I have acquired the title, and I am proud of it; it is for you to render yourselves worthy of it." The father of Frederic, of whom the son, who was so maltreated by him, has spoken so admirably, and with sentiments not filial, but truly loyal and magnanimous,—that rough, economical, avaricious father, the persecutor of his family and the idolator of discipline, that praiseworthy man, who "had a laborious soul in a robust body," had restored to the Prussian State the solidity which, through the inflation and vanity of the first king, it had lost. But that was not enough; Frederic's father, estimable as he was in many respects, when closely viewed, was not respected at a distance; even his moderation and the simplicity of his manners had been prejudicial to him. People regarded his twenty-four thousand troops as a parade-show, and as a corporal's grandiose madness. Prussia was not counted among the European powers; and when Frederic, at the age of twenty-eight (1740), mounted the throne which he was to occupy for forty-six years, he had everything to do for his own and the nation's honour: he had to create the Prussian honour; he had to win his spurs as king.

His first thought was that a prince should make his person, and, above all, his nation, respected; that moderation is a virtue which statesmen must not always practise

strictly, on account of the corruption of the age, and because, when there is a change of reign, it is more expedient to give proofs of firmness than of mildness. He says again, and he tells us frankly, that "Frederic (his grandfather), in erecting Prussia into a kingdom, had, by that vain display, planted a germ of ambition in his posterity, which would sooner or later fructify. The monarchy which he had left to his descendants was, if I may be permitted to explain myself thus (it is always Frederic that speaks), a kind of hermaphrodite, which partook more of the electorate than of the kingdom. There was glory in deciding that condition of things; and that sentiment was surely one of those which strengthened the king in the great enterprises in which so many motives engaged him." He tells us these motives, and why he anticipated the House of Austria, instead of waiting for it, and letting himself be struck or humbled. He will explain with the same clearness and the same frankness the motives which led him to get the start of his enemies at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, and which decided him to appear the aggressor without being such. These motives, all drawn from the interest of his cause and of his nation, seem in no respect discordant with the maxims of Frederic and with his favourite ideas as philosopher and writer. Knowing men and the things of the world, as he did, he very properly felt that one is not permitted to be a bit of a philosopher upon the throne until he has proved that he knows how to be something else besides. He was not in a humour to play the good-natured part of a Stanislaus. To be more surely a shepherd of his own people, he began by showing to other peoples that he was a lion. All that he willed, he did; he boldly disentangled the position and the function of Prussia, created a counter-weight to the House of Austria, and established in northern Germany a focus of civilisation, a centre of culture and of toleration. It is for his successors to maintain it, and to be faithful, if they can, to his designs.

All the persons who have praised Frederic have made a

reservation touching Poland and the Partition of 1773, which he provoked and by which he profited. Here, as the Polish question is one of those that cannot be treated conveniently and with entire impartiality, I will beg leave to be silent. There is in that Polish name, and in the misfortunes which are associated with it, a remnant of magic which sets men in a flame. Frederic, however, never changed his opinion regarding the character of the Poles as a people: that opinion is energetically expressed in ten passages in his histories, and long before the idea of a partition occurred to him.

In that affair, however, and whatever was the fact regarding the motives which he has himself exposed in all their nakedness, he violated that which the ancients called the conscience of the human race, and he took part in one of those scandals which always shake the confidence of the peoples in the protective law of societies. He forgot his own maxim: "The reputation of a knave is as dishonourable to the prince himself, as disadvantageous to his interests." But here the considerable interest of the moment and of the future, the instinct of natural enlargement, won the day. In that, again, he was not so inconsistent as one would believe him to be. His delicacy as a philosopher was not such that it could not accommodate itself to these political procedures. While he had sentiments of relative justice and even of humanity, Frederic, like all his age, was absolutely wanting in ideality; he did not believe in anything that was better than himself. He governed and earnestly cared for the men who were entrusted to his keeping; he made this duty a matter of honour and dignity; but he did not place it upon any deeper foundation. We touch here upon the radical vice of that wisdom of Frederic's, I mean irreverence, irreligion. The cynical railleries of his conversations and letters are well known: he had the capital fault, for a king, of jesting, of jeering at everything, even at God. The love of glory was the only thing about which he never jested.*

* One of the most competent judges, one of the assistants of M.

Strange inconsistency and protest of a noble nature! for if the human race is so foolish and so worthy of contempt, and if there is no thing or person above it, why go and devote body and soul to the idea of glory, which is nothing else than the desire and expectation of the highest esteem among men? It is inconceivable that, looking at everything, as he did, from the higher standpoint of the State and the social interest, Frederic should have regarded religion as one of those neutral grounds where people may meet for after-dinner pastimes and pleasantries. He forgot that he himself, writing to Voltaire, had said: "Every man has in him a ferocious beast; few know how to chain him; the majority let him loose, when fear of the law does not restrain them." His nephew, William of Brunswick, permitted himself one day to show him the inconsistency there was in thus relaxing the religious ties which restrain the ferocious beast. "Oh! against the rascals," replied Frederic, "I have the hangman, and that is quite enough." No, that is not enough; when one has the hangman only, it is insufficient. It is at this point especially that the establishment of Frederic fails and is imperilled; he could be a great organizer, he was not a legislator.

But, even setting aside the sovereign's interest, it is offensive to see a great man sully his name by pleasantries of this kind regarding objects which are respectable in the eyes of the great majority; it was, to a certain degree, a violation of the hospitable toleration in which he gloried, thus openly to despise that which he professed to welcome and tolerate. It betrays a relic of native bad taste and of northern coarseness, and one could say with just severity of the letters of Frederic: "There are vigorous and great thoughts, but, close by them, we see beer and tobacco."

Preuss in the preparation of the works of Frederic, M. Charles de La Harpe, writes to me in regard to this subject: "There are two other things also concerning which he never jested, the love of country and friendship. This mocking hero is the tenderest and most faithful of friends, and one knows that his passion for his country was such that he deprived himself of everything that he might be able to alleviate its miseries and endow Prussia with useful institutions."

stains upon these pages of Marcus Aurelius." Frederic, who had respect for heroes at least, has said : " Since pious Æneas and the crusades of Saint-Louis, we have seen no example in history of devout heroes." Devout, it is possible, taking the word strictly ; but religious, one may say that heroes have almost always been ; and John Muller, the illustrious historian, who so well appreciated the merits and great qualities of Frederic, was right in his conclusion concerning him, when he wrote : " Frederic wanted only the highest degree of culture, religion, which completes humanity and humanizes all greatness."*

I will say no more of Frederic to-day, except as a historian. His histories are composed of " Memoirs of Brandenburg," which contain all that we need to know of the Prussian annals anterior to his accession ; and four other works, which contain the history of his time and of his reign from 1740 to 1778. The history of the Seven Years' War is one of these four compositions, and that by which he naturally takes a place between Napoleon and Cæsar.

The " Memoirs of Brandenburg " are the only portion which appeared in his lifetime. From the preface it is plain that we have to do with a lofty and firm spirit, that has the noblest and soundest ideas upon the class of subjects he handles. " A man," he says, " who does not believe

* M. Henry, pastor of the French church at Berlin, has written a dissertation in which he treats of Frederic's irreligion ; without pretending to absolve him in this matter, the worthy writer believes that there has been a great deal of exaggeration of that French side of Frederic, by which he flattered the philosophers of the eighteenth century. He seeks to show that Frederic himself, with a kind of swagger, took pleasure in exaggerating it. M. Henry thinks that this irreligious mockery of Frederic transpired chiefly on the surface of his soul ; that, in yielding himself to it, he yielded chiefly to a bad tone of society, thinking that it would never come to the public knowledge, but that the basis of his royal nature was serious, meditative, and worthy of a legislator who comprehends and would provide for the fundamental needs of every society and of every nation. In a complete and impartial appreciation of Frederic, it is well to take note of the facts to which M. Henry calls attention, and of the point of view to which he refers them.

that he has fallen from heaven, who does not date the world's epoch from the day when he was born, must be curious to know what has passed in all times and in all countries." Every man must, at least, care for what has passed before his time in the country which he inhabits. In order that this knowledge may be really profitable, one condition is indispensable,—truth. Frederic wishes for truth in history: "a work written without freedom can be only mediocre or bad." He will speak the truth, then, about persons, about another's ancestors as about his own. But he believes that he should record, touching every matter, only that which is memorable and useful. He gives no heed to curiosities. He leaves to the professors in us, fascinated with learned minutiae, to know of what stuff was the coat of Albert surnamed Achilles. He is firmly of opinion that a thing does not deserve to be written except so far as it deserves to be remembered. He runs rapidly over the barbarous and sterile times, and over those of his ancestors of whom one knows only the names or some insignificant dates. "It is with histories," he says, "as with rivers, which become important only at the place where they begin to be navigable." He chooses the French in preference to every other language, because it is, he says, "the most polished and the most widely-diffused language of Europe, and because it appears in some way to have been fixed by the good authors of the age of Lewis XIV." He might have added, because it is the fittest to express the thoughts of a clear-headed, bold, sensible, and resolute genius.

All the little biographies of the primitive Electors, of whom there is nothing great to be said, are sketched with sobriety and with a severe taste. A few sarcasms thrown out by the way, some philosophical sallies, mark the pupil of Voltaire; but these pleasantries are haaty ones, and do not here derogate from the general tone. That tone is simple and manly, and the narration is enriched with curious but forcible reflections, which reveal the chain of causes. When he comes to the epochs of the Reformation

and the Thirty Years' War, the historian-king characterizes those great events in a few words, by their general traits and in their real principles; he never fails to distinguish the essential things from the accessories. When he recounts the horrors and the devastations which signalized those sad periods of history, he shows sentiments of humanity and order, sentiments of good administration which are perfectly unaffected, and which he will justify. I have said that the type which he proposes for imitation, the man from whom he justly dates the greatness of his house, is Frederic-William, called the Great Elector, he who began to rule Brandenburg at the end of that disastrous Thirty Years' War "which had made of the Electorate a frightful desert, in which one recognised the villages only by the heaps of ashes which prevented the grass from growing in them." He enlarges upon this reign with complacency; he goes so far even as to dare establish a parallel between that little northern prince and Lewis XIV. in his glory: saving two or three passages, which are a little flowery and too mythological, saving a slight oratorical accent which betrays itself here and there, this comparison forms a fine page of history, and one that is really noble in tone. It is to be noted that Frederic, in writing, while he is severe in style, is less sober than Cæsar and even than Napoleon; he does not refuse the use of art, especially in that first history of which Gibbon could say that it was well written. Having to narrate the campaign of 1679, in which the Great Elector, in mid-winter, drove out the Swiss, who had invaded Prussia, he will say: "The retreat resembled a rout; of sixteen thousand Swedes, which they numbered, hardly three thousand returned to Livonia. They had entered Prussia like Romans; they left it like Tartars."

He has sayings which sum up a complete judgment upon men and upon nations. In the portraits of his grandfather, the first Frederic, son of the Great Elector, who was so little like his father, he will say to mark the pomp of that king, who had no less than a hundred chamberlains:

“His ambassadors were as magnificent as those of the Portuguese.”

His judgments of men are profound and decisive. To heroes he has a visible attraction; he speaks only with respect, and with a deep fraternal instinct, of the Gustavus-Adolphuses, of the Marlboroughs, of the Eugenes; but he is not deceived in regard to greatness, and does not waste words upon it: Queen Christiana and her capricious abdication appear to him only whimsical; the duel between Charles XII. and Peter the Great at Pultowa appears to him a duel of two of the most singular men of their century. Foreigner though he is, he knows how to choose his expressions like a just mind that fits or bends language to its thought. Of that same Peter the Great he will say elsewhere with energy: “Peter I., to govern his nation, worked upon it like aquafortis upon iron.”

For painting statesmen and ministers he has those well-chosen and authoritative words which are historical in advance, and which grave themselves on the memory. Wishing to characterize the too vast and too restless genius of Cardinal Alberoni, and his too fiery imagination, he says: “If one had given Alberoni two worlds like ours to turn topsy-turvy, he would still have demanded a third.” The portraits of the eminent persons whom he knew and managed are thrown off with the hand of a master, and, as it were, by a man who was clever at this business, and endowed with a natural aptitude for seizing upon vices or ridiculous traits. To give an idea of General Seckendorff, who served at the same time both the Emperor and Saxony, he says: “He was sordid-minded; his manners were coarse and rustic; lying was so habitual to him, that he had lost the use of truth.* It was the soul of a usurer, which passed sometimes into the body of a soldier, and sometimes into that of a negotiator.” And observe that all this is not

* This trait recalls the portrait which Xenophon, in his “Retreat of the Ten Thousand,” has traced of Meno, who had come, in the way of lying, even to look upon truthful persons as ill-bred persons, without education.

after the portrait style, as in histories more or less literary, where the historian stations himself before his model: it is said on the spur of the moment, as if by a business man who thinks aloud and talks.

When he enters upon the affairs of his own time, those which he has directed and in which he has co-operated, Frederic keeps the same tone, or rather he speaks with even more simplicity than in his "History of Brandenburg." In speaking of himself, he is neither haughty nor modest; he is true. In speaking of others, even of his greatest enemies, he is just. At the beginning of his reign, narrating that conquest of Silesia which roused the anger of so many persons, and which succeeded at once to his wishes, he discloses his motives nakedly; he indicates his faults and his schools in war. Along with measures and calculations dictated by a far-sighted boldness, he recognises what he owes to "opportunity, that mother of great events," and he is careful to make allowance in every affair for the part which fortune plays:

"That which contributed the most to that conquest," he says, "was an army which had been formed during twenty-two years by an admirable discipline, and which was superior to the rest of the soldiery of Europe (note the homage to his father); some true citizen generals, some wise and incorruptible ministers; and finally, a certain good fortune which often waits upon youth and denies itself to advanced age. If that great enterprise had failed, the king would have passed for a rash prince, who had undertaken what he had not strength to accomplish; success caused him to be regarded as clever as well as lucky. Really it is only fortune which determines reputation; he whom she favours is applauded; he whom she disdains is blamed."

The "History of the Seven Years' War" is admirable for its simplicity and truth. The author does not limit himself to strategic operations,—he depicts the Courts of Europe during that time. In reciting the events of the war, he is sober, rapid, not entering into personal details, except in a few cases, where he cannot help paying a tribute of gratitude to his brave troops or to some valiant companion in arms. I recommend the reading of the sixth chapter, which treats of the campaign of 1757, that campaign so full of vicissitudes

and reverses, in which Frederic, reduced to despair, won his easy and brilliant victory of Rossbach, and his masterly and classic victory of Leuthen. If we join to this narrative, so noble and so simple, the letters which he wrote to Voltaire during the same period, we shall see Frederic at the most brilliant time, at the crisis from which he came forth with the most heroic and glorious perseverance. It is here that we truly recognise the philosopher and the Stoic in the warrior. The gravest reproach which he makes against the Austrian court is that "it follows the brute instincts of nature; puffed up in prosperity and cringing in adversity, it never has been able to attain to that wise moderation which renders men impassive to the blessings and the ills which chance dispenses." For himself, he is resolved, in the greatest extremities, never to yield to chance or to brute nature, but to persevere so well in the path of great souls that he will finally make Fortune blush with shame.

On coming out of this war, in which so much blood was spilled, and after which everything was placed upon its former footing, saving the devastations and the ruins, Frederic loves to dwell upon the futility and emptiness of human schemes: "Does it not seem astonishing," he says, "that all that is most refined in human prudence, joined to force, is often the dupe of unexpected events or of sudden chances? and is it not plain that there is a certain I know not what, which sports contemptuously with the projects of men?" One recognises here a recollection of Lucretius in some of his finest verses: *Usque adeo res humanas vis abdita quædam. . . .* Napoleon, undertaking the campaign of 1812, wrote to the Emperor Alexander: "I understood that its lot was cast, and that that invisible Providence, whose rights and empire I recognise, had decided upon this matter as upon so many others." It is the same thought; but there is in Napoleon's reflection a flash more of inspiration, there is, so to speak, a mysterious reflection brought back from Tabor, which the thought of Frederic lacks. That accomplished king needed to mount

one step more upon the height to receive on his brow the ray that gilds and that also which dazzles.

Frederic, nevertheless, reads the human heart rightly, and shows himself to be a just moral observer and a practical prophet when he adds :

“Time, which heals and effaces all ills, will soon, no doubt, give back to the Prussians their abundance, their prosperity and their first splendour ; the other Powers will likewise re-establish themselves ; then other ambitious men will stir up new wars, and cause new disasters ; for that is the peculiarity of the human mind, that examples correct nobody ; the follies of fathers are lost upon their children ; every generation must commit its own.”

Perhaps at another day I shall speak of Frederic as a dilettante, a lover of the Fine Arts and of Belles-Lettres. I have also some unpublished details thereupon, which, on occasion, will serve me as a pretext.

II.

I HAVE tried in the preceding essay to set forth Frederic, as king and politician, in his highest and truest character, —the historic, not the anecdotal Frederic. It is thus that he himself thought that great men should be finally judged, —without amusing ourselves with the accessories, —by rising to the point which governs their contradictions and their caprices. The inner and private life of Frederic, however, is fully known ; every part of his character has been revealed ; we have his letters, his verses, his pamphlets, his whims and facetiæ, his secret disclosures of every kind ; he did nothing to suppress them ; and it is impossible not to recognise in him another very essential person, which is at the man's very heart. One may say that if, in Frederic, the great king was duplicated by a philosopher, he was also complicated with a man of letters.

The great Cardinal Richelieu was so too ; to have composed a fine tragedy would have been a thing almost as sweet to his heart, and would have appeared to him a work

almost as glorious as to triumph over the Spaniards, and to maintain the allies of France in Germany; the laurels of the Cid would not let him sleep. At the close of the Seven Years' War, when D'Alembert went to visit Frederic at Potsdam, and spoke to him of his glory,—“He told me with the greatest simplicity,” writes D'Alembert, “that there was a fearful deduction to be made from that glory; that chance counted in it almost for all; and that he would much rather have composed ‘Athalie’ than have waged all that war.” There is certainly something of the philosopher in this way of judging military triumphs; but there is always something of the man of letters in the preference thus given to “Athalie.” I know not whether Frederic would not have contradicted himself, in case an evil genius had taken him at his word, and he had really had to choose between the Seven Years' War and “Athalie;” or rather I am very sure that the king, in the end, would have won the day; but the poet's heart would have bled within him, and it suffices for us, to qualify him as we do, that he could have hesitated for a single instant.

When we study Frederic in his writings, in his Correspondence, especially that which he had with Voltaire, we recognise, it seems to me, an evident fact: there was a man of letters pre-existing in him before all, before even the king. What he was before everything else, naturally, and so to speak, most unaffectedly and primitively, was still a man of letters, a dilettante, a virtuoso, with a lively taste for the arts, with especially a passionate worship of genius. He had only to abandon himself to his inclinations to overflow in that direction. His position as king, his love of honourable glory, and the great capacity with which he was endowed, directed him to other employments, which had for their aim social utility and the greatness of the nation: he thought that “a good mind is susceptible of all sorts of forms, and that it brings the proper aptitudes to everything it would undertake. It is like a Proteus which changes its form without difficulty, and which appears really to be the object it represents.” Thus he appeared to have been born

for everything he had to do as king; he was up to the height of his task. "The strength of States," he thought, "consists in the great men to whom nature seasonably gives birth in them." He wished to be, and he was one of those great men; he worthily fulfilled his function as a hero. The nation which the Great Elector had sketched before him, he formed and completed by giving it a body and by impressing it with unity of spirit; Prussia did not really exist till it went out from his hands. Such is the part of the great Frederic in history; but, at heart, his secret, or even slightly secret tastes, his real delights, were to reason upon every subject, to follow out his thoughts as a philosopher, and also to cast them upon paper, whether seriously or in jest, as a rhymist and a writer.

He had been educated by a Frenchman named Duhan, a man of merit, who had inspired him with love for our language and literature. He had been initiated, after a kind of tradition which was yet correct enough, by the French refugees in Berlin. That desire of glory which nourished the young soul of Frederic, and which sought also its object, made him naturally turn his eyes toward France. The age of Lewis XIV., now completed, gradually extended its influence over all Europe. Brandenburg was slower than the other nations; there was nothing astonishing in that; but Frederic felt humiliated by it, and he believed that it was for him to inaugurate that new era of Renaissance in the North. While his father lived, this purely literary desire of Frederic prevailed over his other thoughts, and engaged him in some proceedings, some advances, in which the future king forgot himself a little. He was princely and twenty-four years old when he began the Correspondence with Voltaire (1736). Voltaire was living then at Cirey with Madame du Châtelet. He received from the young prince of Prussia, not a complimentary letter, but a real passionate declaration. One may smile to-day at that first letter, so awkward and more than half Teutonic, in which Frederic mingles his admiration for Wolff with his admiration for Voltaire, and in which he speaks to the

latter in the name of human kindness, and talks of the "support which you offer," says he, "to all those who devote themselves to the arts and sciences." Through this singular style of Frederic's first letters the noblest thought finds its way. Looking at Voltaire from afar, and judging of him by his works alone, embracing him with that youthful enthusiasm which it is honourable to have felt at least once in one's life, Frederic proclaims him the only heir of the great age which has just ended, "the greatest man in France, and a mortal who does honour to speech." He admires him and salutes him, as Vauvenargues will soon likewise salute him, without getting a glimpse of the faults of the man, simply on account of the beauties of his mind and the graces of his language. He declares himself, consequently, to be his disciple, his disciple not only in his writings but in his actions; for, deceived by the distance and by the gilded mists of youth, he sees in him almost a Lycurgus or a Solon, a legislator and a sage.

Do not, however, be too ready to smile at this. Never has one more clearly perceived than that young prince what literature might be in its highest inspiration, how much it contains that is elevated and useful, and how much of its glory is durable and immortal. "I count it as one of the greatest blessings of my life that I was born a contemporary of a man who has so distinguished a merit as yours." This sentiment breaks out in all this phase of the Correspondence. Voltaire is charmed: Voltaire is complimentary; he thanks, he praises, he enchants; we should not say truly that he is secretly laughing, and doubtless he did not then laugh much, at certain solecisms and swelling tones which often accompanied these northern praises. According to him, that young prince makes verses like Catullus in the time of Cæsar; he plays upon the flute like Telemachus; he is Augustus-Frederic Virgil. Enough, replies Frederic, who has the advantage here in respect to good sense and good taste, morally speaking: "I am, I assure you, neither a species of great man nor a candidate for greatness. I am but a simple individual who is known

only to a small part of the Continent, and whose name, according to all appearances, will serve only to decorate some genealogical tree, to fall afterward into obscurity and oblivion." Such is his self-judgment, and he was right at that date ; this man of twenty-five feels that he is nothing yet, and that he has not even made a beginning. "When persons of a certain rank," he remarks, "complete half of a career, people award them the prize which others do not receive till they have finished it." He is indignant at this difference in standards, as if one deemed princes to be of an inferior nature to other men, and less capable of an entire action.

One day Voltaire has the impudence to say to him that he, Frederic, writes better French than Lewis XIV., that Lewis XIV. was ignorant of orthography, and other wretched things of that kind ; as if Lewis XIV. was not one of the men in his kingdom who spoke the best, and as if one of the greatest praises that could be given to that excellent writer, Pellisson, was not his having been on more than one occasion the worthy secretary of Lewis XIV. Here, again, Frederic checks Voltaire, and gives him a lesson in tact : "Lewis XIV.," says he, "was a prince great in an infinity of ways ; a solecism, an orthographical error, could not sully in the least his reputation, established by so many deeds which have immortalized him. He had the right in every sense to say : *Cæsar est supra grammaticam*. I am not great in any way. It is only my application which may one day, perhaps, make me useful to my country ; and that is all the glory to which I aspire." One loves to meet, amid the insipidities and occasional ridiculous extravagances in this beginning of the Correspondence, more than one of these passages in which the future king already peeps out,—the superior man, who, although he has the rage for rhyming and for producing his first works, will know how to triumph over it by a higher passion, and who will never be a rhetorician on the throne. In everything, even in these plays of the mind, Frederic always ends by laying the greatest stress on action, on social

utility, and the country's good ; he is a genius who amuses himself while waiting for something better, who will continue to amuse himself and to make merry in the intervals of the roughest toils, but who will always aspire, by force of a firm will, to reach a practical and useful greatness. There is a time for him to laugh, to play the flute, to make verses, and a time to reign. The man of letters may sometimes balance the king, and frolic before him, but it is only to give way to him, when it is necessary, at the precise hour. One may say of him that never did one of his talents, never did one of his passions or even of his manias, interfere with one of his duties.

Considered as matters of taste, there were many things to be noticed. The rude and slightly coarse nature of the Vandal betrayed itself in Frederic even athwart the intellectual man and the dilettante eager to learn and to please. It is not merely language and expression which fail him here and refuse to obey ; it is often delicate tact which is wanting. Every time he speaks to Voltaire of Madame du Châtelet, he finds it very hard to avoid being ridiculous : " I respect the ties of friendship too much," he writes to Cirey, " to wish to tear you away from the arms of Emily." When he wishes to be polite, it is with this levity. Frederic can think of nothing more graceful than to send as a present to Voltaire a bust of Socrates, the sage who was pre-eminently patient ; which would have looked like an epigram, if at that time he had better known his poet. But that Socrates recalls to Frederic Alcibiades, and hence more than one equivocal and dangerous allusion, in which, however, Voltaire does not disdain to participate. All this savours of the Goth and the Hordule, who have great minds, but minds whose polish is only superficial, and in which more than one corner is not polished at all. That rough diamond will require some time to disengage itself from its matrix.

Nevertheless Frederic improved rapidly ; he improves visibly in this Correspondence, and there comes a time when he masters and manages his French prose in a way to

challenge the criticism of Voltaire. As to his verses, we must despair of him ; for this form of expression his throat will always remain hoarse and hard, and he will never correct himself. He will say, for example, without difficulty :

“ Les myrtes, les lauriers, soignés dans ces cantons
Attendent que, cueillis par les mains d'Emille, . . . ”

or, again :

“ Que vous dirai-je, O tendre Ovide ?
Vous dédiâtes l'Art d'aimer.”

These are his smallest faults. Let us end this chapter on Frederic's verses. He knew very well that this madness was in him a weakness and an object of ridicule ; that people praised him to his face, only to call him Cotin behind his back. “ That man,” said Voltaire one day, showing a pile of papers from the king, “ do you see ? is Cæsar and the Abbé Cotin.” An eminent English historian, Mr. Macaulay, improving upon this, called Frederic a compound of Mithridates and Trissotin. Frederic knew or had a misgiving of all that, yet yielded, nevertheless, to his rage for rhyming. Being very amorous in his early youth of a young girl who loved verse, he had been bitten by the tarantula, but though entirely cured of one ill (that of loving young girls) he was never cured of the other. One could say nothing to him upon this subject, in the way of objection or expostulation, which he had not said a hundred times to himself : “ I have the misfortune,” said he, “ to love verse, and often to make very bad verse. That which should disgust me, and repel every reasonable person, is precisely the spur which most pricks me on. I say to myself. ‘ Unhappy little poet ! thou hast hitherto been unable to succeed ; courage ! ’ . . . ” He will say to himself also : “ Whoever is not a poet at twenty will not become such while he lives. . . . No man who was not born a Frenchman, or who has not lived a long time at Paris, can possess the language in the degree of perfection which is necessary for writing good verse or elegant prose.”

He will compare himself to vines "which always have a flavour of the soil in which they have been planted." But, finally, this occupation amuses him; it diverts and rests him in the intervals of great affairs, and, even to the last, he will rhyme. He also composed some music after the Italian taste, solos by hundreds, and he played on the flute, we are told, to perfection, which did not hinder Diderot from saying: "It is a great pity that the mouthpiece of that beautiful flute should be spoiled by some grains of Brandenburg sand."

In Germany, where they write dissertations on everything, they have discoursed on the books and the libraries of Frederic, upon the authors whom he preferred, and they have drawn conclusions concerning the nature and quality of his tastes. From the fact that he calls D'Alembert, in his letters, my dear Anaxagoras, one has gone so far as to suppose, for example, that he had a certain predilection for the philosophy of Anaxagoras. These are the refinements and subtleties of commentators. In order to be informed of the real intellectual tastes of Frederic, it is sufficient to hear him himself, as he describes himself to the life, in his Correspondence. He knew antiquity only by translations, and by French translations; he did not therefore judge well, except in the gross, those things which resist that kind of transport from one language into another. The poetic beauty of the ancients escaped him altogether; he did not even suspect it. He judged some historians well, who were proper subjects for his study and meditation; and yet when we see him lavish the title of Thucydides on Rollin or even on Voltaire, we are forced to confess that he does not appear to have any notion of the peculiar manner which constitutes the originality of that great historian. He would judge better of Polybius, in whom the subject-matter is most important; a really meritorious critic (M. Egger) calls my attention to the fact that Frederic as historian and Polybius have some real and very striking correspondences. The reflections with which Frederic terminates his recital of the Seven Years' War, closely

resemble a page of Polybius: "At a distance of two thousand years, there is the same way of judging of human vicissitudes, and of explaining them by tricks of cleverness mingled with tricks of fortune,"—only the historian-king is more sparing of reflections. Frederic judged certain ancient moralists and philosophers well also, and even some philosophic poets in whom thought predominated, like Lucretius: "When I am afflicted," said he, "I read the third book of Lucretius, and that comforts me." Yet even into that which was the subject of his familiar readings, he was so far from looking closely, as regards erudition, that he chanced inadvertently to class Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius in the list of Latin authors. Among the moderns, he esteemed Locke and Bayle most highly, those breast-high philosophers, whom he was tempted to place a little too near or even above the great, imaginative authors, like Leibnitz or Descartes, whose errors offended him. He did not hesitate to ridicule the transcendental geometry as useless, and he went so far in this matter as to be called to order by D'Alembert. His studies were directed most willingly to practical morality and social science; in that he resembled Voltaire, who was himself as practical as a writer can be, and he might have said like him: "I go to the fact; that is my motto."

Touching German literature, Frederic is hardly in doubt; he is very sensible of its faults, which were without compensation down to that date,—heaviness, diffuseness, the division of dialects,—and he indicates some of the remedies. He has, however, a presentiment of some fine days at hand for this national literature, and he predicts them: "I announce them to you, they are going to appear!" He does not seem to suspect that they have, in fact, begun to shine at the end of his life, and that Goethe has already come. But can one be astonished that Frederic has not noticed Werther?

To sum up: everything like manly and firm thought went straight to his sensitive and vigorous mind. In all other things, it is too clear that he was more or less out of

his element; in all that one may call invention or poetry, he made only rough attempts, native sallies, which burst forth especially in his conversation, but which under his pen became feeble or turned heavily to imitation. In his admiration for Voltaire there was a certain amount of truth and justice, and there was also a certain amount of error and illusion. He was marvellously sensible of the gaiety of that brilliant imagination. He enjoyed that lively, familiar, sportive genius. "It is not given to everybody," said he, "to make the mind laugh." No one can better describe that species of attraction, of luminous and flashing talent peculiar to Voltaire. Toward the end, while wishing him pleasanter sentiments, he saluted him still as "the finest organ of reason and of truth." All this is as well felt as it is justly expressed. But when Frederic admired in Voltaire the pre-eminently great poet, when he saw in the "Henriade" the *ne plus ultra* of epics, and when he put it above the Iliads and the Æneids, he showed simply his lack of an ideal, and at what point, on that side, his horizons were limited. The great objects of comparison had kept out of his range and out of his sight; he spoke upon that matter precisely like a man who had neither seen nor conceived, at any day, the supreme and real beauty.

"What pleasures surpass those of the mind!" cried Frederic at twenty-five,—mind, that is to say, the brilliant reason, reason sportive and lively. He thought always thus, and the whole secret of his passion for Voltaire is there. That passion (this is truly the word for it) was, moreover, reciprocal: Voltaire cannot dissemble it; he himself, the great coquet, was smitten with Frederic, and in the witty but miserable libel, so unworthy of confidence, which he wrote after his flight from Berlin, to avenge himself upon the king, he cannot help saying, in speaking of the Potsdam suppers: "The suppers were very agreeable. I know not whether I am deceived; it seems to me that there was much wit there; the king had it, and made others have it." Note well the attraction, even in his

anger. See the irresistible fascination which they exercised upon each other, and which survived even friendship! In the second part of the Correspondence, when they renew it after the quarrel, we find they have assumed entirely different characters. Every illusion has vanished, and nothing more remains but that lively relish of talent, which manifests itself still. Moreover, the primitive and youthfully enthusiastic Frederic has disappeared; he has given place to the philosopher, to the superior and worldly-wise man, who no longer gropes his way anywhere. The king also makes himself oftener felt. They speak truths on both sides, and (rare thing) they bear them. Voltaire tells some to the king, and Frederic pays him back: "You have behaved very badly to me," writes he to Voltaire. . . . "I have pardoned you all, and I even wish to forget all. But if you had not had to do with a fool who was in love with your fine genius, you would not have got off so well at every other. . . ."

Nevertheless, after these severe words, too strong not to be just,—after these words, the king, as the fool in love with the brilliant mind, easily betrays himself again when he adds: "Do you need some sweet things? In good time; I will tell you some truths. I regard you as the finest genius whom the ages have produced; I admire your verses, I love your prose, especially those little detached pieces of your literary Miscellanies. Never has any author before you had a tact so fine, a taste so sure, so delicate, as you have. You are charming in conversation; you know how to instruct and to amuse at the same time. You are the most bewitching creature that I know, and capable of making yourself loved by everybody when you will. You have so many graces of mind that you can offend and at the same time merit the indulgence of those who know you. Finally, you would be perfect if you were not a man."

Let any one say now whether he who had such a liking for Voltaire, and who found these French ways of insinuating sweet things after the bitterness, was not the man of

his time who showed the most ability when confronted with Voltaire.

When one has read a certain portrait of Voltaire by Frederic (1756), a portrait traced with the hand of a master, with unerring penetration and without embellishment, one understands still better the meaning of the language which he has just used,—that that seductive genius has such graces that he speedily lays hold again of the very persons whom he has offended, and who know him.*

I believe that I have kept within the bounds of truth in saying that the intellectual attraction of these men for each other survived even their friendship; for it is evident, when we read in good faith the whole series and the end of that Correspondence, that their friendship itself has not died, that it has revived with some of the old charm mingled with reason, and that it is founded, not simply on amusement, but on their serious and higher qualities. At the same time that he combats the always irascible and choleric instincts of the now aged Voltaire, Frederic exalts and favours, as far as possible, his beneficent and humane tendencies. He takes pleasure in praising, in encouraging as a defender of humanity and toleration, the man who clears and repeoples the almost abandoned soil of Ferney, as he himself has peopled the sands of Brandenburg; in a word, he recognises and he embraces the great practical poet as his fellow-labourer in social work and in civilisation. With a remnant of veneration, and, if one will, of yet touching idolatry, Frederic, in all the comparisons he makes of the two, always gives the advantage to Voltaire, and that, too, in a heartfelt tone whose sincerity is above suspicion. Speaking of that future of perfected reason of which he perceived hardly the dawn, and of which, thoroughly sceptical as he was, he did not utterly despair as regards the future of humanity, he says: "Everything

* It appears to be proved to-day that that remarkable portrait of Voltaire, found among Frederic's papers, was not his composition: in copying it with his own hand, he limited himself to ratifying its truth.

with man depends upon the time when he comes into the world. Although I have come too late, I do not regret it: I have seen Voltaire; and if I see him no more, I read him and he writes to me." From such accents one might divine, though he did not tell it, the passion which was still the profoundest and the most radical in Frederic, that which Voltaire while living personified in his eyes: "My last passion will be that for letters!" It had been the first also.

The intercourse of Frederic with D'Alembert was of quite a different nature from his intimacy with Voltaire; it was never as lively, but it was long and enduring. It was not simply a natural liking which drew Frederic to D'Alembert: "We princes have all selfish souls, and we never make acquaintances except when we have some private views, which look directly to our profit." Frederic had early thought of drawing D'Alembert to Berlin to make him President of his Academy. That purpose became quite serious after the death of Maupertuis, and when Frederic had come out of the Seven Years' War. I have before me the manuscript and unpublished Collection of Letters, written by D'Alembert to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse during his sojourn with the king of Prussia. In June 1763, D'Alembert went after Frederic, who was then in his Westphalian States; joining him at Gueldres, he travelled as one of his suite as far as Potsdam. D'Alembert had already seen Frederic several years before; on seeing him again, he was surprised to find him greater than his reputation. Frederic had the characteristic peculiar to great men, of surpassing expectation even at the first sight. He begins by chatting four hours in succession with D'Alembert; he speaks to him with simplicity, with modesty, of philosophy, of letters, of peace, of war, of everything. At that date, that is to say, three months only after peace was concluded, Frederic had already rebuilt 4500 houses in the ruined villages; two years after (October 1765), he will have rebuilt not less than 14,500. We observe, at the very outset, with D'Alembert, this organizing and even pacific side of the warrior. The amiable, familiar, and seductive

side of Frederic is perfectly indicated in the recital of our traveller; the prudent and modest guest has not had time or a desire to perceive some faults which often impaired that groundwork of wisdom and of agreeableness.

Honours do not turn the head of D'Alembert: he is touched, but not intoxicated. While on his way to the Brunswick States, he has dined at the table of the ducal family, and has been styled marquis: he has submitted to the title after a slight protest. Apparently, he says, that was etiquette. With Frederic there is no etiquette, and all passes as with a private man, a man of genius. D'Alembert would have little to do to become necessary to Frederic by his conversation, as Frederic would be to D'Alembert. It was no longer the time of brilliant suppers at Potsdam, of which Voltaire had seen and contributed to the last five days: the familiar guests of that time, the friends of the king's youth, at that second epoch, were dead or grown old. The king was not merely the pleasantest man in his kingdom; if we except the Lord Marshal, he was the only one. "He is almost the only person in his kingdom," says D'Alembert, "with whom one can converse, at least can have that kind of conversation of which one knows but little out of France, and which becomes a necessity when one has known it once." D'Alembert is inexhaustible upon the king's affability and gaiety, the lights which he brings to bear upon every subject, his good administration, his care for the welfare of his people, the justice and the justness which mark all his judgments. Touching Jean Jacques, he says: "The king talks, it seems to me, very well about the works of Rousseau; he finds heat and force in them, but very little logic and truth; he professes to read only for self-instruction, and the works of Rousseau teach him little or nothing."

To D'Alembert, whose estimable character he appreciated at the outset, Frederic shows himself purely as a philosopher; one sees him as he would have liked to be seen in the second half of his life, if gout and ill-humour had not irritated him too much, and if he had had about him some

worthy person to sympathize with and listen to him:—
“His conversation runs sometimes upon literature, sometimes upon philosophy, very often even upon war and politics, and sometimes upon contempt of life, of glory, and of honours.” This is the circle of human subjects which he loved to treat habitually, sincerely, and always in a moralizing way; but literature and philosophy were still the topics of which he loved to chat above all others, in order to unbend, after he had done his duties as king. All the good qualities of Frederic are set in relief in this recital; and D’Alembert, elsewhere circumspect, cares not to see any others during these three months of his visit. He knows, however, how to resist the caresses and the delicate offers of the king. One day when he was walking with him in the gardens of Sans-Souci, Frederic gathers a rose and presents it to him, saying: “I should very much like to give you something better.” That better was the Presidency of his Academy. It is singular to see thus connected the Presidency of an Academy and a rose. D’Alembert remains wise; he remains a philosopher and a friend to the end, and faithful to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. He returns to France grateful, with his heart for ever won to Frederic, but not vanquished.

All must be told. Some years after, Frederic communicated, one evening, some of his verses to Professor Thiébault, a good grammarian and academician, whom D’Alembert had procured for him, and inadvertently suffered himself to go so far as to show a very biting epigram which he had composed against D’Alembert himself; that caustic king could not deny himself the malicious pleasure of noting something ridiculous which he had hit upon in that honourable character. It was a capital fault of Frederic; he did not easily deny himself the pleasure of saying disobliging things to people or of writing pungent things about them. In the present case he soon repented having shown his epigram to Thiébault, and he enjoined secrecy; the good D’Alembert never knew anything of it. But surrounded, as he was, at home with courtly wits, and all more or

less dull, Frederic was less scrupulous with them. As soon as he had discovered their weak side, he pricked them pitilessly in their vulnerable points; he made them his butts; he took pains to show his contempt for humanity in their persons, and he thus acquired the reputation of a bad man, when he was really only a terrible satirist of society. The wittiest of these dull courtiers and of these false friends, such as the able Bastiani, secretly avenged themselves on the king by reviling him to strangers. M. de Guibert has reported to us in his "Journal of Travel" one of these confidential disclosures full of baseness and of perfidy, regarding which he shows himself too credulous. The misfortune of Frederic was to be surrounded at all times, and especially towards the end of his life, only by second-rate people of letters, whose not very elevated character afforded too ready facilities to his princely sports. Worthy men, who had respect for themselves, like D'Alembert, would have compelled him in his turn to respect them. The estimable Thiébauld, in his modest way, knew how to do this.

Returned to France, D'Alembert continued to correspond with Frederic; and (if one forgets the epigram which was never known), the Correspondence gives evidence on both sides of much reason, of genuine philosophy, and even of friendship, so far as it could then exist between a private person and a monarch. Let us not forget that D'Alembert also had his weaknesses; we know already that the philosophers of the eighteenth century had not much love for the liberty of the press, except when it promoted their own interest; one day D'Alembert was insulted by some gazetteer who edited the "Lower Rhine Courier," in the States of Frederic; he denounces him to the king. Here it is Frederic who is the true philosopher, the true citizen of modern society, and he replies:

"I know that a Frenchman, a countryman of yours, daubs regularly two sheets of paper a week at Cleves; I know that people buy his sheets, and that a fool always finds a greater fool to read him; but I find it very difficult to persuade myself that a writer of that temper can prejudice your reputation. Ah! my good D'Alembert, if you were king of England, you would encounter many other lampoons, with

which your very faithful subjects would furnish you to try your patience. If you knew what a number of infamous writings your dear countrymen have published against me during the war, you would laugh at this miserable scribbler. I have not deigned to read all these works which are the offspring of the hate and envy of my enemies, and I have recollected that beautiful ode of Horace: 'The wise man continues unmoved.' . . ."

He continues to paraphrase the *Justum et tenacem*. . . . We recognise in this admirable lesson the disciple of Bayle on the throne. At another day it will be the disciple of Lucretius. D'Alembert is plunged in sorrow, a deep and very legitimate sorrow: he has lost Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; he is going to lose Madame Geoffrin. That geometer's heart, so sensitive to friendship, does not fear to overflow into the soul of Frederic,—to pour into it its grief, and almost its sobs; and the king replies to him as a friend and as a sage, by two or three letters of philosophical consolation, which should be quoted in full. A lofty and tender epicureanism breathes through them, that of a Lucretius speaking to his friend:

"I compassionate the misfortune which has happened to you, in losing a person to whom you were attached. The wounds of the heart are the most painful of all, and, in spite of the fine maxims of the philosophers, it is only time that can heal them. Man is an animal that has more feeling than reason. It has been my misfortune to have had too bitter an experience of what one suffers from such losses. The best remedy is to do violence to one's feelings, to divert one's attention from a painful thought which is too deeply rooted in the mind. Some geometrical occupation should be chosen which demands much application, to dispel as well as one can the fatal ideas which are incessantly renewed, and which it is necessary to banish as far as possible. I would propose to you better remedies, if I knew of any. Cicero, to console himself for the death of his dear Tullia, threw himself into literary composition, and wrote several treatises, some of which have reached us. Our reason is too weak to vanquish the pain of a mortal wound; we must yield something to nature, and confess to ourselves that at your age, as at mine, one must console himself with the thought that he will not be long in rejoining the objects of his regrets."

He then engages to come and pass some months with him: "We will philosophize together on the nothingness of life, on human philosophy, upon the vanity of stoicism

and of our whole existence." And he adds, with that mixture of the warrior-king and the philosopher which would seem contradictory if it were not touching here, that "he will feel as much joy in tranquillizing him as if he had won a battle." Such letters well atone for some blunt expressions which one might find in the same collection, and which recall at times the presence of the master; they are a reply to those who, judging Frederic only by his harsh words and by his epigrams, deny that he had, even at the close of his career, sentiments of affection, of humanity, and, I dare say, of goodness, even that he had had real and lively sentiments of friendship in his youth. For myself, on whatever side I regard him, even in the years when his faults were most marked, I can, on the whole, but come to a favourable conclusion, and say, as Bolingbroke said of Marlborough: "He was so great a man that I have forgotten his faults." In the present case, the great man had, in spite of all, some goodness and some humanity, and a basis of heart.

In a select edition of Frederic's works, which should be made for the use of people of intellect and taste, in order to avoid the trash whose proximity always spoils the best things, I would have admitted only his Histories, two or three of his Dissertations at most, and his Correspondence; there would be already quite enough of his verses, which are scattered through his Letters, without adding others. We should thus have in all a dozen volumes of strong, sound, agreeable, and entirely instructive reading. Let us drop those names, so often applied to Frederic, and which would be injurious or flattering,—the too debateable names of the Emperor Julian and Marcus Aurelius; let us not employ, on the other side, the name of Lucian, of whom he would only furnish parodies and strange travesties; but, if we would give him a classic designation, let us define him in his best productions as a writer of the most marked character, whose temper is wholly his own, but who, in the habit and turn of his thought, resembles at once Polybius, Lucretius, and Bayle.

THE ABBÉ GALIANI.

IN speaking some time ago of Madame d'Épinay, I had occasion to notice the Abbé Galiani, with whom that lady carried on a correspondence during the last twelve years of her life. The Abbé Galiani is one of the liveliest, the most original, and the gayest figures of the eighteenth century ; he wrote a good number of his works in French ; he belongs to our literature as truly as any stranger naturalized among us, almost as truly as Hamilton himself. But at the same time that he entered so well into the ideas and tastes of French society, he knew how to preserve his own manner, physiognomy, and gesture, and also an independence of thought which prevented him from abounding in any of the commonplaces of the time. He prided himself on having a way of looking at things which was peculiar to him ; and such was the fact, for he did not see like anybody else. The eighteenth century, judged in the person of the Abbé Galiani, reappears to us in entirely new aspects.

The Abbé Ferdinand Galiani, born in the kingdom of Naples on the tenth day of December 1728, and brought up in the city of Naples by an uncle who was an archbishop, manifested the most precocious talents for letters and for every kind of science ; but, physically, he was never able to rise above four feet and a half in stature. In that little body, so well formed and so handsome, dwelt nothing but talent, grace, lively fancy, and pure wit ; the gaiety of the mask covered much good sense and many profound ideas. In 1748, Galiani, at the age of twenty, became celebrated in his country by a poetic pleasantry, a funeral Oration on the public executioner, who had just died ; it was a burlesque

parody on the Academical Eulogiums, which were far more bombastic in Italy than elsewhere. The academicians of Naples, turned into ridicule, made an uproar which increased the success of the ingenious satire. Galiani, about that time, gave himself up to the gravest studies; he published at the age of twenty-one a book upon money; he rendered to an illustrious savant, then very old and almost blind,—the Abbé Intieri,—the service of describing in his name, in a small, substantial, and very practical treatise, a new way of preserving grain. He gave his attention also to antiquities and to natural history. Having made a collection of volcanic stones and other things thrown up by Vesuvius, he added to it a learned dissertation, and presented it to Pope Benedict XIV., who was not ungrateful. Upon one of the boxes sent to the address of the Most Holy Saint Peter, Galiani took care to write these words from the Gospel: "Make these stones to become bread." The amiable Benedict XIV. took the hint, and, in exchange for the stones, gave Galiani a benefice. That little four-foot-and-a-half man, so gay, so foolish, so sensible, and so learned, was now a mitred abbé, and had the title of My Lord.

He came to Paris in 1759 as secretary of the Italian embassy, and, with the exception of certain brief absences, he resided there till 1769, that is to say, for ten years: he considered that he had lived a true life only during that time. Distinguished from the very first day by the singularity of his stature, he at once disconcerted jeering curiosity and changed it to friendliness by the vivacity and piquancy of his repartees. He was the delight of the social circles which appropriated him to themselves; his private friends, especially Grimm and Diderot, deeply appreciated the novelty and reach of his views and his lights. "That little being, born at the foot of Mount Vesuvius," cried Grimm, "is a true phenomenon. He joins to a luminous and profound *coup d'œil* a vast and solid erudition,—to the views of a man of genius the playfulness and charm of a man who seeks only to be amused and pleased. It is Platon

with the animation and gestures of harlequin." Marmontel likewise said of him: "The Abbé Galiani was personally the prettiest little harlequin that Italy had produced; but upon the shoulders of that harlequin was the head of Machiavelli." That name, harlequin, which is repeated here, is characteristic of Galiani. French-like as he was, and as he wished to be, he did not cease to be an Italian, a Neapolitan,—a fact which must never be forgotten in judging of him; he had the peculiar genius of the soil, facetiousness, pleasantry, a taste for parody. In an article of his upon Punchinello, he represents him as being born in the country, not far from the place where the Atellan farces of antiquity had their origin. He seems to think that the spirit of those ancient farces may have been perpetuated in the modern original, and the little abbé himself had inherited something of their buffoonery and licence. He had great, lofty, sublime thoughts, worthy of Vico if not of Plato, worthy of Magna Græcia, and suddenly these thoughts were put to flight by buffooneries, jests, fooleries, or something worse. "You see," said he pleasantly, "that I am two different men kneaded together, who, nevertheless, do not entirely occupy the room of one."

To-day the Abbé Galiani loses much; we should have heard him. He did not tell his stories; he played them; he had some of the qualities of the mime. *Apropos* to every serious theme, in politics, in morality, and in religion, he had some apologue, some good story to tell, a lively, foolish, unexpected story, which made you laugh yourself to tears, as he said, and which often concealed a profound moral reflection. He made a little play of it, an acting show, bustling about, throwing himself to and fro, carrying on a dialogue in each scene with the most artless gracefulness, making the spectators, even Madame Necker and Madame Geoffrin, put up with liberties and even indecencies. He painted himself to admiration in a letter to the latter person, written at Naples. In writing it he mentally sees himself again at Madame Geoffrin's, and he depicts himself to us as he was when there in times past:

“See me then as ever, the abbé, the little abbé, your little thing. I am seated in the comfortable arm-chair, moving my feet and arms like a demoniac, my wig awry, talking much, and saying things which one deems sublime and attributes to me. Ah, madame, what a mistake! It was not I who said so many beautiful things; your arm-chairs are so many tripods of Apollo, and I was the Sibyl. Be assured that upon chairs of Neapolitan straw I utter only stupid things.” No, he did not utter stupid things; but, at Naples, the kind of talent which he had in the highest degree was more common than at Paris; one took less notice in Naples of the play, the action, because it was a more customary thing, and one did not know how to separate from it all the excellent and unique ideas which Galiani veils under this guise. This gesticulating petulance which appeared so curious at first at Paris, was vulgar in Toledo street and its neighbourhood; Galiani lacked listeners and the circle for himself alone. “Paris,” he often cried, in accents of despair, after having quitted that city,—“Paris is the only place where I am listened to.” Having once retired to his own country, that country which he nevertheless loves, and of which he is one of the living curiosities, he dies of words returned to him unheard. Galiani is a true Neapolitan virtuoso, but one who cannot do without a Parisian auditory.

And how he was relished there! Let one be in La Chevrette at Madame d'Épinay's, at Grand Val with Baron D'Holbach; if one feels a little sad, and the day lowers, if the conversation languishes, if the rain falls, the Abbé Galiani enters, “and with the pleasant abbé, gaiety, imagination, wit, sportiveness, everything that causes the pains of life to be forgotten. The abbé has an exhaustless fund of sayings and pleasant sallies,” adds Diderot; “he is a treasure on a rainy day. I said to Madame d'Épinay, that if they made such persons at the toy-shops, everybody living in the country would want to have one.” Of these happy sayings and sallies of the abbé, he has preserved a large number. Some one was speaking of the trees in the

park at Versailles, and it was remarked that they were tall, straight, and slender. "Like the courtesans," added the Abbé Galiani. Fond of music, and of exquisite music, as the Neapolitans are, as the friend of Paisiello should be, he disliked the French opera of the time, which made too much noise; and when, after the burning of the hall of the Palace Royal, the opera had been transferred to the Tuileries, and some one complained that the hall was bad for hearing, "How happy it must be!" cried Galiani. But many people, or at least more persons than one, have these sallies which spring out of the occasion, which last but for a moment and are followed by a long silence; but with the Abbé Galiani there was no silence; he sustained the conversation almost alone; he enlivened it with the maddest, merriest fancies, which were yet replete with fine good sense. In this he had no parallel in his class. Diderot, in his letters to Mademoiselle Voland, has preserved some of the abbé's good stories, that of the *porco sacro*, the apologue of the tall and fat monk in the mail-coach, the story of the archbishop counterfeiting a duchess in bed before a cardinal who visits her, and the colics of the false duchess and what follows,—in fine, a thousand untranslatable fooleries, which, narrated by Diderot himself, have remained in the state of mere rough sketches. All this is spoken, is played and improvised, but it cannot be written. The ancients had the mimes (little dramatic pieces) of Sophron, which have been lost; we have lost the mimes of Galiani. Diderot, however, has very well reported the apologue of the Cuckoo, the Nightingale, and the Ass, and one may read it in his works; but of the apologues of Galiani I prefer to repeat the one I find reported in the Memoirs of the Abbé Morellet, and which is quite famous:—

One day at Baron D'Holbach's, after dinner, the assembled philosophers had talked of God at the top of their voices, and had said things fitted "to bring down thunderbolts upon the house a hundred times, if they ever fell for such a reason." Galiani had listened patiently to all this

intrepid dissertation ; finally, tired of seeing the whole company taking but one side of the question, he said :

“Gentlemen philosophers, you travel very fast ; I begin by telling you that, if I were the pope, I would hand you over to the Inquisition, and if I were king of France, to the Bastille ; but as I have the happiness to be neither the one nor the other, I will come back to dinner next Thursday, and you shall hear me as I have had the patience to hear you, and I will refute you.”

“On Thursday !” they all cried with one voice, and the challenge was accepted. Morellet continues :

“Thursday arrives. After dinner, the coffee having been taken, the abbé seats himself in an arm-chair, with his legs crossed like a tailor’s, as usual ; and, as it is warm, he takes his wig with one hand, and gesticulating with the other, he begins nearly thus :

“I will suppose, gentlemen, the person among you who is most thoroughly convinced that the world is the work of chance, to be playing with three dice, I do not say in a gambling-house, but in the best house in Paris, and his antagonist throwing double-sixes once, twice, three times, four times,—in fine, continually.

“However short the game, my friend Diderot, if he should thus lose his money, would say without hesitation, without a moment’s doubt, “The dice are loaded, I am in a den of thieves.”

“Ah, philosopher ! how is this ? Because in ten or twelve throws the dice have fallen from the box in such a way as to make you lose six francs, you firmly believe that it is in consequence of an adroit contrivance, of an artificial combination, of a well-planned trick ; and yet, when you see in this universe so prodigious a number of combinations, a thousand and thousand times more difficult, and more complicated, and more constant, and more useful, etc., you never suspect that nature’s dice are also loaded, and that there is, up above there, a great knave who makes a sport of overreaching you.”

Morellet gives only the outline of this exposition, which from the lips of Galiani was assuredly (and one will believe it without difficulty) the most piquant thing in the world, and as good as the most amusing play.

Here are our philosophers painted from life ; here we have them, like all the epicureans in the world, making a play of the gravest questions of destiny and human morality, a pure joust or game of their leisure hours, in which the for and the against are treated with equal levity, and yet utterly astonished afterward (I speak of those who

survived, like the Abbé Morellet), if one day all these doctrines burst forth, and, falling upon the street, are recapitulated in Revolution Place at the festivals of Reason and the other goddesses. The people, however, only translated there the reasoning of the subtlest thinkers; they translated it coarsely, after the usual way of translators, but without much misconstruction.

Galiani, in this dispute, has the appearance of playing a noble part: he seems to plead in favour of order and the supreme Ordainer, against the dogmatic and excessively brutal atheism of his friends. Let us not, however, after this facetious sermon, form too edifying an idea of his performances. He had too much acuteness and good sense not to be shocked by the absolute theories of D'Holbach: "In reality," he thought, "we do not know enough of nature to form a system of it." He accused those pretended systems of nature of destroying all the illusions that are natural and dear to man; and as D'Holbach's book appeared about the time when the Abbé Terray issued a decree of bankruptcy, he said: "That M. Mirabaud (D'Holbach's pseudonym) is a true Abbé Terray of metaphysics. He makes reductions and suspensions, and causes the bankruptcy of knowledge, of pleasure, and of the human mind."

In philosophy the true system of the Abbé Galiani is this: he believes that man, when his mind is not too much subtilized by metaphysics and excessive reflection, lives in illusion, and was made to live in it. "Man," he tells us, "was made to enjoy effects without the ability to divine causes; man has five organs framed expressly to indicate to him pleasure and pain; he has not a single organ to apprise him of the truth or falsehood of anything." Galiani does not believe, then, in absolute truth for man, in truth worthy of the name: relative truth, which is only an optical illusion, is the only kind, according to him, for which man should seek. According to him, also, there is an illusion in morality as in physics; it produces results which, relatively to society and man, may be beautiful and

good. It is because the human eye was fashioned so as to see the heavens round and vaulted, that man afterward invented the cupola, the dome of the temple, sustained by columns, which is a beautiful thing to see. So in morality, our internal illusions regarding liberty and the first cause have given birth to religion, morality, and law, all of which are useful things, natural to man, and even true if you please, but their truth is purely relative and wholly dependent on the configuration, on the first illusion.

We see to what such a way of looking at things leads him, in religion and morality. But if he prides himself upon being himself unaffected by illusory views and relative impressions, he is not furious to destroy those of other persons, a characteristic in which he differs essentially from his friends, the French philosophers of the eighteenth century. He would quite agree with any one who should say: "I seem to be, in life, in an apartment between the cellar and the attic. There is a flooring which conceals the girders, and, if one has means, he also puts a carpet under his feet. One tries also to adorn his ceiling, to hide the laths. If one could have upon that ceiling a beautiful fresco, a sky painted by Raphael, it would be so much the better. So with the illusions of life and its deceitful perspectives; it is necessary to respect them, and at times to be pleased with them, even when we know too well what there is beyond them."

This, in all its reality, is the theology of the Abbé Galiani, and I do not give it, even when viewed from the illusory standpoint, of which he made so much, as very beautiful or consoling; the sum total, he admits, is equal to zero. But in his scepticism there is none of the arrogance and intrepidity of doctrine which offends us in his friends. When Madame Geoffrin fell sick, in 1776, after some devotional excesses which she had committed during the Jubilee exercises, Galiani wrote to Madame d'Épinay:

"I have mused over that strange metamorphosis (of Madame Geoffrin), and I have found that it was the most natural thing in the world. Incredulity is the greatest effort which the mind of man can

make against its own instinct and its taste. He strives to deprive himself for ever of all the pleasures of the imagination, of all taste for the wonderful; he tries to empty the whole sack of knowledge (and man would know all), to deny or to doubt always and to doubt everything, and to remain in an utter impoverishment of all sublime ideas, knowledge, and information. What a frightful void! what nothingness! what an effort! It is, then, demonstrated that the great majority of men, and especially of women (whose imagination is double that of man), could not be incredulous, and those who could be so would be able to sustain the effort only while enjoying the greatest strength and youthfulness of soul. If the soul should grow old, a certain degree of credulity would reappear."

He adds also that the sceptic, he who persists in being so at all seasons, "performs a real feat; that he resembles a rope-dancer, who performs the most incredible feats in the air, vaulting about his cord; he astonishes and frightens all the spectators, and nobody is tempted to follow or imitate him." He concludes that we should never persecute true unbelievers, quiet and sincere unbelievers; wait, and do not regard them, and there is every chance that a moment will come when the effort against nature will begin to be relaxed, and the unbeliever will be such no longer.

When one heard him talk politics, one said that he was equally luminous and charming. When we read to-day the observations upon political themes that drop from his pen in his Correspondence, allowance must be made for the bold ideas, the paradoxes, the necessity of amusing himself, which always tormented him, his mania for predicting and prophesying, and finally for the perpetual buffooneries which are mingled with all that he writes. With him a piece of grave and profound reasoning turns suddenly into a joke. Nevertheless, amid all these faults, which to-day are very perceptible, there is much good sense, many ideas, horizons of wide extent, and vistas at every instant.

The two contemporaries with whom he was the most intimate, and with whom he had the most affinity in heart and mind, Grimm and Diderot, were his enthusiastic admirers, and spoke of him as a true genius. Galiani

himself seems to have no aversion to that way of looking at him, and he does not fear to say offhand, without guarding his language: Montesquieu and I. Other contemporaries seem to have been more struck with his faults. The wise and shrewd David Hume writes to the Abbé Morellet:—

“The Abbé Galiani returns to Naples; he does well to quit Paris before I go there, for I should certainly have put him to death for all the ill things he has said of England. But it has turned out as his friend Caraccioli had predicted, who said that the abbé would remain two months in that country, that nobody would have a chance to speak but he, that he would not suffer an Englishman to edge in a syllable, and that on his return he would pronounce upon the character of the nation, and would continue to do so for the rest of his days, as if he had known and studied that character exclusively.”

Galiani had at a certain moment a great success and a real triumph. “About the year 1750,” says Voltaire, “the nation, satiated with verses, tragedies, comedies, operas, romances, romantic histories, moral reflections more romantic still, and theological disputes about Grace, and convulsions, set itself at last to reasoning about grain. People forgot even the vines, to talk only of wheat and rye. . . .” Grain, and all that is connected with that trade, was then very fashionable during the sojourn of the Abbé Galiani in France. Was it necessary to grant it a free exportation? Should the exportation be regulated or forbidden? The economic sect was then established, and enlightened men gave great attention and respect to these systematic views. Galiani, who was very much at home in such discussions, and who had studied these questions before coming to France, was horrified by absolute ideas upon such subjects, and, above all, by the dogmatic, trenchant, mysterious, and wearisome way in which the economists presented theirs. He set himself to reasoning and jesting on the matter. It appears that it was to some pleasantry in which he allowed himself to indulge upon this subject,—pleasantries of which M. Choiseul was the victim, and which related to the concessions which that minister had made to the new ideas,—that the abbé owed his recall from France, which had been requested of the Neapolitan

court by Choiseul himself. Be that as it may, Galiani, on leaving, shot his arrow; he left in manuscript his "Dialogues upon the Grain Trade," which appeared in 1770, and of which Diderot revised the proofs. That was the fireworks and the bouquet with which the witty abbé brilliantly crowned the period of his Parisian life. We can form no idea to-day of the success of those Dialogues; the women doted upon them; they thought they understood them; they were then economists, as they were afterward electricians, as they had previously been believers in Grace, as they are to-day to some extent Socialists; they are always following the fashion of the day or of the morrow. These Dialogues of Galiani have been compared to the "Brief Letters" of Pascal; that is saying a good deal. They are less easy to read to-day than the "Provincial Letters," which are themselves a little wearisome in some passages. Galiani chose the dialogue form of composition, as being the most French-like style. "That is the natural style," said he. "The language of the most social people in the world, the language of a nation which speaks more than it thinks, of a nation which needs to speak in order to think, and which thinks only in order to speak, should be the language best fitted for dialogue." With regard to the subject-matter, — in combating the absolute ideas and reasonings of the economists, Galiani aimed to give a glimpse of the political ideas which should rule and even dominate in these matters. When he said of a man, "He is an economist and nothing more," he believed that he had pronounced sentence upon him, and excluded him from the sphere of statesmen. "He is a good man to compose memoirs, journals, or dictionaries," added he, — "to give occupation to printers and booksellers, to amuse the idle; but as to governing the State, he is good for nothing." A statesman, according to him, should not only have a thorough knowledge of special subjects, but he should also know the matter *par excellence* upon which he has to operate, that is to say, the human heart. "You are a delicate anatomist of man," says the marquis of the

Dialogues to the chevalier. The latter replies, "That is what one should be, when one would speak of men. They must be well understood by him who presumes to govern them." He denied that Turgot himself had that knowledge and that art, and with far more reason he affirmed the same of the men of the economic school. Galiani did not have to wait for the alarm and trumpet-peal of the French Revolution, in order to distrust the optimist and rationalistic statesmen, the honest people so well known in the time of Lewis XIV. and afterward, who too often forget the true, real, and always perilous circumstances of every political society. "Believe me," said he, "do not fear the rogues, nor the wicked men, for sooner or later they are unmasked. Fear the honest man who is deceived: he acts in good faith, he means well, and everybody trusts him; but unhappily he is deceived concerning the means of doing good to his fellow-men." Galiani's friends, and the abbé himself, were accustomed to say of his work on grain, "It is not so much a work on the Grain-Trade as a work on the Science of Government: one should know how to read the white in it, and between the lines." The French Government charged the Abbé Morellet with the task of replying to Galiani, and the former abbé, who was as tall as the other was short, as didactic and heavy with the pen as the other was light and sparkling, replied in such a way as to win no readers. He has none of the waggeries which the malicious Neapolitan, during that dispute, addressed from afar to his patient and slow adversary. Turgot, whose economic principles were very much concerned in the discussion, has given his opinion of Galiani's book, and, without despising its agreeable qualities, has written some words which clearly mark the opposite nature of their views, inspirations, and doctrines. "I do not like any better," says he, after some criticisms upon Galiani's hop-and-skip method, designed to puzzle the reader,— "I do not like to see him always so prudent, so hostile to enthusiasm, so very much in sympathy with all the *Ne quid nimis*, and with all those people who enjoy the present, who are very much at ease, who let

the world wag, because it goes very well with them,—people who, having their bed well made, are unwilling that any one should disturb it." Turgot touches here on one of the weaknesses of the little mitred and beneficed abbé.

Galiani believed in a secret doctrine in everything, in a secret intention which few people are called upon to penetrate, and which even men of great talent do not suspect. He pretended, in his half-serious, half-jesting way, in which the thought is duplicated with the joke, that there are three kinds of reasonings or resoundings: (1) The reasoning of dunces; they are, as he believed, the most ordinary kind, those of the mass of men. (2) The reasonings or resoundings of bells; these are the kind employed by many poets and orators, by people of high talents, but who, according to the abbé, are influenced too much by appearances, by the majestic and resounding forms of the human illusion. He dared to range in this class of reasonings those of Bossuet and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (3) Finally, there are, according to him, again, the reasonings of men, of the true sages, of those who have cracked the nut (like the Abbé Galiani), and who have found that it contains nothing. I think that in his most serious moments he would have defined the sage as "he who, in the hours of reflection, disengages and divests himself completely of all relative impressions, and who accounts for his own proper accident, his own nothing, amidst the universality of things."

The Abbé Galiani quitted Paris, no more to return, in the summer of 1769, and it is at this date that his Correspondence with Madame d'Épinay begins; it is by means of her that he is reattached to his Parisian friends, and he will very often have occasion to repeat to her: "I am lost if you fail me."

This little Machiavelli, who affected a lack of feeling, who boasted that he never wept in his life, and that he had seen with dry eyes his father, mother, sister, all his friends, pass away (he calumniated himself), wept and sobbed on quitting Paris, on quitting, as he said, "that amiable nation which has loved me so much." It was

necessary to tear him away from it, since of himself he never would have had strength to leave it. His entire Correspondence is but one long regret. The city of Naples, which has so many attractions for one who has seen it but once, and in which one would like to die, appeared to him but a place of exile. "Life there has a killing uniformity. What can one do with himself in a country where they dispute about nothing, not even about religion?" He finds occupation there, nevertheless, and of a more serious kind than he pretends. A servant of the king, Counsellor-Secretary of Commerce, he judges, or professes to judge, difficult cases; he applies himself in the intervals of duty to letters and study; he revises, corrects, and prepares new editions of his early writings: "they are all in Italian; there are dissertations, verses, prose, antiquarian researches, detached thoughts: all this writing is, indeed, very youthful, still it is mine." He artlessly reveals to us, in these things of the mind, his parental tenderness. He also applies himself to new tasks; he pushes still farther his studies on Horace, upon whom he had already commented with a rare taste, sharpened with paradox; he thinks of drawing from his favourite poet a complete moral philosophy. He gives himself up, with a passion which one loves to recognise, to his Neapolitan dialect, maintaining its superiority and priority to the other Italian dialects; he compares it to the Doric of the Greeks. Among the celebrated poets and prose writers in that patois, one would find, I imagine, more than one type of Galiani remaining in the pure state, and not cut out after the French fashion. Having become a Neapolitan again, the abbé, that he may not lose the habit, begins again to make fun of fools, the literary pedants of the town, and, under the title of "The Imaginary Socrates," he constructs a theatrical piece, an opera bouffé, the verses of which are composed by another person, and the music by the illustrious Paisiello. The piece causes a *furor*, and it is thought that its representation must be forbidden. Amidst these mental diversions, and sports with his cat which furnishes him with a thou-

sand occasions for philosophic and playful observations, Galiana punctiliously performs his duties as a public man and as head of a family. He has three nieces whom he does not spare in his Correspondence ("My nieces are stupid, and a cat is all the company I have"), three nieces who are demanding with a hue-and-cry to be married, and of whom he is, as he says, the jockey. While he seems thus to be laughing at them, he marries them in a very fatherly way. Meanwhile the poor abbé grows old, and sooner than other persons, as if in his case, owing to his extreme vivacity of spirit, everything was more rapid,—as if the scantier stuff must be more quickly consumed. He loses his teeth,—he, the epicure, can no longer eat; and,—O woe above all others!—he can no longer talk, he stammers. "But imagine what that means, the abbé dumb!"

By a contradiction which is not rare, this epicurean, who will allow to men no generous springs of action, and who dissects and decomposes all that appear such, shows in his own affairs a noble, elevated soul, and all the pride of an honourable man. The ministers are successively changed; his fortune, which is good certainly, but not on a level with his talents, is impaired at the same moment. What matters it to him that his friend Sambucca becomes minister in place of Tanucci? "A minister is attached only to people who are devoted to him, and I cannot devote myself to any one; I cannot even give myself to the devil,—I am my own!"

In the same way this man who affects insensibility experiences all the inquietudes of friendship; he feels its cruel pains in the losses which are his lot. It is true that the number of his genuine friends, of those to whom he is really attached and bound by secret fibres, lessens with the years. Learning through Madame d'Épinay the death of one of his Parisian friends, the Marquis of Croismare, he is astonished that he is affected less than he would have believed. "This phenomenon has astonished me,—has almost made me horrified at myself,—and I have desired to investigate its cause. It is not absence; it is not that my

heart has changed or hardened ; it is because one is attached to the life of another person only in the degree that he is attached to his own, and one is attached to life only in proportion to the pleasures it yields him. I understand now why peasants die tranquilly, and so stupidly see others die. A man sent to Bicêtre, to remain there for ever, would hear of all the deaths in the universe without regret." This theory, which is perhaps very true, is found to be at fault in respect to him, as soon as he is confronted with a great loss, which really takes hold of the heart : he has not yet reached the state of insensibility which he imagines. "Time," he remarks, "effaces the little furrows, but the deep impressions remain. I know now who are the persons that interested me most at Paris ; during my first years there I did not distinguish them." The day when he loses Madame d'Épinay, on that day only does his heart break, and his Parisian life close ; Galiani the Parisian dies with her, Galiani the Neapolitan continues to vegetate. A Parisian woman, Madame du Bocage, proposed to replace Madame d'Épinay as his correspondent, in order to keep him apprised of things and persons ; he refuses this diversion and alleviation, and with an accent which one cannot disregard, cries :

"There is no more happiness for me ; I have lived, I have given wise counsels, I have served the State and my master, I have held the place of father to a numerous family, I have written to make my fellow-men happy ; and now, at that age when friendship becomes most necessary, I have lost all my friends ! I have lost all ! One does not survive his friends."

Bravo ! amiable abbé, it is thus that you nobly disagree with your avowed principles, with your pretence of dryness, and it is for this that one loves you !

The Abbé Galiani died according to the forms and the proprieties of his cloth and his country, not without having perpetrated, even at the last hour, some pleasantries in the style of Rabelais. We might add his name to the list of celebrated men who have died jesting. He was less than fifty-nine years old when he expired, October 30, 1787.

His Correspondence with Madame d'Épinay, his true ground of recognition by us to-day, has been published in two volumes. In these letters he speaks too much of his money matters and his postages. He wishes incessantly to appear amusing, sparkling, and he is not every day in the vein. "I am stupid this evening. . . . I have nothing droll to send you from here. . . . I am not gay to-day, and my letter will not be suitable to repeat." These expressions drop perpetually from his pen, and hurt the naturalness of his letters. There are days, we perceive, when he pinches himself to make his reader laugh. Add to this the inconvenience of frequent, incredible indecencies, even for the age of Diderot and Voltaire, and which have no precedent out of Rabelais. "Let us not yield to the delicate people," Galiani used to repeat; "I wish to be what I am, I wish to assume the tone that pleases me." He used and abused that licence.




No one has ever spoken better of France, no one has ever judged it better than the Abbé Galiani; one should hear him explain why Paris is the capital of curiosity; how "at Paris there is only *l'àpropos*;" how we speak so well of the arts and everything else, while often only half succeeding in them. On the occasion of an Exhibition at the Louvre, and I know not what criticism that had been made upon it, he said: "I remark that the ruling character of the French peeps out always. They are essentially talkers, reasoners, jesters; a bad picture brings forth a good book; thus you will speak of the arts better than you will ever practise them. It will be found at the end of the account, some ages hence, that you will have reasoned the best, and discussed the best, concerning that which all the other nations will have done best. Cherish printing, then; it is your lot in this lower world." This, however, does not prevent him, at another day, from speaking very severely of the liberty of the press, which M. Turgot, it was said, thought of granting by an edict, and from wishing it very much restricted, even in the interest of the French mind, which has better policy and success when under constraint. "There

are empires which are handsome only in their decay," he again says of us. Finally he understands us, he loves us, he is one of our citizens ; and we indeed owe to this charming abbé an honourable, choice, purely delicate burial, *urna brevis*, a little elegant urn, which should not be larger than he.

Upon it should be engraved, as an emblem, a Silenus, a head of Plato, a Punchinello, and one of the Graces.

NOTE.

THE foregoing translations are by William Matthews, LL.D., and Miss Harriet W. Preston. Dr. Matthews' essay upon Sainte-Beuve may be mentioned along with that of Matthew Arnold in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the admirable anonymous article in the *Westminster Review* for 1871: though D'Haussonville's biography is, it may be added, the chief source of information. The first five and the two last essays in this volume are from Dr. Matthews' interesting selection, "Monday Chats," published in America some years ago. The other essays are from a series of Sainte-Beuve's "Portraits of Women," which Miss Harriet W. Preston translated and issued in volume form.

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